

Kuwait ex-minister faces fraud charges

KUWAIT (R) — Former Oil and Finance Minister Sheikh Ali Khalifa Al Sabah is among five people due to stand trial on Tuesday on charges of embezzling public funds, the official Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) said Sunday. "The criminal court will look into the case of five persons, three of whom are Kuwaitis against whom the general prosecution had filed charges of embezzling funds of the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC)," KUNA said. The report was the first named by any official body in connection with the case. KUNA identified the four as: "The former finance and oil minister, Sheikh Ali Al Khalifa Al Sabah, (former) Financial Manager of the aforementioned company (KOTC) Nasim Mohsen, a Jordanian, the (former) deputy KOTC chairman for financial affairs, Hasan Qabazard, Kuwaiti, and Tim Stafford, a Briton, and the company's (former) Chairman Abdut Fatah Al Badr, Kuwaiti — all abroad except for the third defendant." Mr. Qabazard has been in detention in Kuwait since January last year. Sheikh Ali is currently in Kuwait. The other three defendants are abroad.

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South Yemen forces stage manoeuvres

ADEN (AP) — Amid increasing tension threatening to destroy Yemen's political union, southern military units Sunday staged manoeuvres claiming the exercises were in response to northern military movements. The south accused President Ali Abdulla Saleh, a northerner who leads the General People's Congress (GPC), of responsibility for military escalation. In Sanaa, the congress dismissed the charge. Meanwhile, a committee of parliamentarians and tribal chieftains reported it had nearly completed drafting a national charter of reconciliation which it said it would present to the leaders of Yemen's increasingly fractious north and south on Tuesday. In another development, Planning Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani told reporters he had offered to resign to protest Prime Minister Haidar Al Attas' suspension of a national census scheduled for Jan. 21. Mr. Iryani is a northerner and Mr. Attas is a southerner. "Suspending the census represents the pitch of divisioning (the country)," Mr. Iryani stated. It was not immediately known whether the prime minister would accept Mr. Iryani's resignation.

Italian elections set for March 27

ROME (R) — Italy will hold early general elections on March 27, state television quoted a government spokesman as saying on Sunday. The date was set after President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro dissolved parliament, which has been disbanded by Italy's political corruption scandal, and asked Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi to stay in office until the landmark polls. (see page 10)

Juppe in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe arrived in South Africa Sunday for a three day visit during which he is to hold talks with the country's top political figures. Mr. Juppe, the first French foreign minister to visit here in 18 years, will hold talks with President Frederic de Clerk and his South African counterpart Piki Botha before touring the Soweto black township. On Tuesday, Mr. Juppe will meet African National Congress President Nelson Mandela and the organization's secretary general, Cyril Ramaphosa.

Salinas offers amnesty

MEXICO CITY (AP) — President Carlos Salinas de Gortari urged armed rebels Sunday to lay down arms and accept an amnesty plan that would cover all crimes committed in the first two weeks of their insurgency. Speaking on national television, Mr. Salinas said he was proposing legislation to grant "a general amnesty to all the participants in the violent acts" from the start of a rebellion Jan. 1 and concluding at 11 a.m. (1700 GMT) Sunday. But Mr. Salinas warned that "any criminal action against the people or against the Mexican army after this period will not have the benefit of an amnesty."

Ahtisaari, Rehn to final round

HELSINKI (AFP) — Social Democrat Martti Ahtisaari and Defense Minister Elisabeth Rehn won through to the second round of Finnish presidential election on Feb. 6, according to first round results Sunday. Former U.N. Under-Secretary General Ahtisaari, who led opinion polls from the beginning of the campaign, won 23.3 per cent of the first round poll, election officials said, after 99.9 per cent of the votes were counted.

Lebanese stage protest in Geneva

GENEVA (AFP) — About 50 Lebanese marked the U.S.-Syrian summit here Sunday with a protest against Syrian and Israeli occupation of Lebanon, correspondents said. The protesters gathered in a city park to remind the world of the need for "an immediate withdrawal" of Israeli and Syrian troops, said a statement from the French-based Rally for Lebanon. "In fact no just and long standing peace in the Middle East can be reached as long as Lebanon remains occupied and the Lebanese people remain ignored," said the group representing Lebanese in France and Switzerland.

Nigerian soldier dies in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — A Nigerian corporal serving with United Nations forces has died in Somalia's capital Mogadishu, a U.N. spokesman said Sunday. Major Chris Budge said the corporal, whose name was not released, had died "of natural causes in his sleep" late Saturday. A Somali who entered a U.S. military base in Mogadishu on Saturday night was arrested, said U.S. spokesman Colocel Steve Rausch. The man was unarmed when he was seized inside Sword Base, Col. Rausch said. Meanwhile Somalis militiamen armed with AK-47 assault rifles swarmed through Mogadishu's main sports stadium Sunday after Pakistani soldiers abandoned what was once their biggest base in Mogadishu at the stadium.

Assad declares normal ties possible with Israel

Clinton, after Geneva summit, says Syria ready for peace accord

Israeli officials respond cautiously to Syrian leader's comments

GENEVA (Agencies) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, after more than five hours of talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton on Sunday, said normal relations with Israel would be possible under a peace agreement.

"If the leaders of Israel have sufficient courage to respond... a new era of security and stability in which there are normal peaceful relations among all shall dawn," he told a news conference in Geneva.

Mr. Clinton, speaking after Mr. Assad, said: "I believe that President Assad has made a clear, forthright and very important statement on normal peace relations... the first time that there has been a clear expression that there will be a possibility of that sort of relationship."

"In order to achieve those relations, a peace agreement has to be negotiated in good faith and carried out," he added.

"I would hope that this would provoke a positive response in Israel and that then the parties would get together and work these details out," he said.

President Assad, asked later whether normal relations included open borders and tourism, said: "We will respond to the requirements of peace and you know, of course, that this will hinge on the peace negotiations and is not to be resolved in a press conference."

Asked if he would sign a peace treaty with Israel during Mr. Clinton's term in office, Mr. Assad, who has now met four U.S. presidents, replied: "Yes, we are ready to sign peace now."

Mr. Rabin, in reaction to the U.S.-Syrian summit, said Israel was ready for "grave steps" for Middle East peace.

But he responded whether Damascus was equally prepared.

Mr. Rabin was to give a detailed reaction once he was briefed by U.S. Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross, who



U.S. President Bill Clinton (right) and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad at a joint press conference in Geneva on Sunday (AFP photo)

was due in Israel late Sunday.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres praised President Assad's words of peace at the summit but said he did not go far enough.

"The tone was too positive to be disappointing, but it was too general to be satisfactory,"

Mr. Peres told journalists.

"We are not disappointed" by Mr. Assad's comments, he said. "I appreciate the tone of the terms used but they must be translated into a more concrete language."

Mr. Peres said the government was "not entirely satisfied" because "the details were not clearly and distinctly indicated."

Uri Dromi, head of the government's press office, commented: "Assad's statements on peace with Israel are a positive step, but to know the importance of them we'll have to know the content of his talks with President Clinton."

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin told Israeli Radio that the U.S.-Syrian summit in Geneva was an "important development" in the search for peace.

"We would have preferred President Assad to speak explicitly of normalising ties between Syria and Israel, the way President Clinton did. But the fact that he spoke up for an authentic peace is important in itself," he said.

Israeli radio said in a first reaction that the Middle East peace process will be given "fresh impetus" by the Clinton-Assad summit.

During his visit, Prince Hassan addressed a conference on the economic and business implications of the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath also participated in the meetings of the board of trustees of the Refugees Institute at Oxford University.

Prince Hassan delegated Princess Sarvath to chair the meetings of board, which was established in 1981 under his Crown Prince's chairmanship.

The institute deals with the legal, administrative and social affairs.

Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath were received upon arrival by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein and Ghazi Ben Mohammad, members of the Royal Family, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali, the Speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Beq Zaid, and senior civil and military officials.

Shortly after his arrival, the Crown Prince was sworn in as Regent.

In an interview with Jordan Television, Prince Hassan said that his call for peace at the conference on the economic implications of the Arab-Israeli peace process was aimed at searching for a humanitarian framework for meetings to help define the position of the international community vis-a-vis human beings, including refugees, displaced persons, and deportees.

"Unless the humanitarian dimension is developed into a global concept it will be difficult for us to talk about the continuation of the peace process," Prince Hassan said.

"At level of the United Nations and organisations concerned with refugees, I have noticed a trend to shift to the comprehensive concept which we have talked about," he added. Prince Hassan also said the World Bank shares the view that regional institutions, including a regional development bank, are needed and that they should follow internationally-accepted standards in dealing with those seeking assistance in order to invest in the human dimension and ensure their involvement in the peace process.

Prince Hassan said he was honoured by being named by His Majesty King Hussein as chairman of the Royal Commission on Jerusalem Affairs. He added that the continued involvement of Jordan in maintaining and looking after the holy places in Jerusalem underlines the linkage between the Hashemites and Jerusalem.

Crown Prince, Princess Sarvath return home

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Royal Highesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath returned home Sunday after a several-day working visit to Britain, where the Crown Prince met with British Prime Minister John Major and discussed with him the political situation in the region and bilateral relations in addition to the situation in the Balkans.

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Saddam says Iraq to defy 'no-fly' zones

BAGHDAD (R) — President Saddam Hussein said on Sunday his country would not remain idle towards the imposition of "no-fly" zones by U.S., British and French planes over northern and southern parts of Iraq.

In a defiant speech marking the third anniversary of the Gulf war over Kuwait, President Saddam said he was running out of patience on the situation in Kurdish rebel north and over the continued U.N. embargo on Iraq.

"We shall not leave our people in northern Iraq or stand hands-folded towards the perpetuation of the blockade and the violation of the sanctity and sovereignty of our air space in southern Iraq," he said in a speech televised live.

His remarks marked a departure from Baghdad's earlier stance not to try to defy the administration of U.S. President George Bush. When Mr. Clinton took office a year ago, Iraq hoped to see a new chapter of relations start with the United States.

The Iraqi leader did not say what measures he had in mind but Baghdad repeatedly defied the "no-fly" zones under former U.S. President George Bush.

Iraq's anti-aircraft defence fired at the Western planes. The United States, Britain and France retaliated by aerial and missile bombing.

President Saddam, dressed in his uniform of field marshal, said: "We have maintained patience over the continued embargo imposed on us by the will of the evils and also maintained patience over the continued flying of their planes in south Iraq and preventing our planes from flying south of the 32nd Parallel."

He added: "We had also maintained patience towards continued plundering in north Iraq and in the life of our people to the north of the 36th Parallel... we shall not relinquish our people in northern Iraq."

The Kurds, under Western protection, have set up their regional government and parliament to the north, away from Baghdad's authority.

Western planes patrol a zone in the north to protect them from attacks by Iraqi army. They also guard another zone in the south to shield dissident Shiites from air attacks by Baghdad.

President Saddam urged the West to forsake illusions on taming Iraq and called on the Western leaders to learn from what he termed past lessons.

"We repeat to all evil masters and subordinates that they should not be illusory and mislead and to learn from

3 sentenced to death, 7 given stiff jail terms for sedition plot

Four-month-old trial of ILP activists and students ends at State Security Court; verdict appealable

By Sana Atiyeh
Special to the Jordan Times

MARKA — The State Security Court Sunday handed down three death penalties, three life prison terms at hard labour and five 15-year prison terms after the three-man military tribunal found 10 men guilty of conspiring to assassinate His Majesty King Hussein.

The verdicts were read out by the presiding judge, Colonel Hafiz Amin, in a four-hour session, ending a four-month trial where the 10 stood accused, two in absentia, on charges of plotting to kill the King, to change the Constitution by force and belonging to an illegal organisation, the Islamic Liberation Party (ILP), aiming to topple the regime and replace it with an Islamic caliphate state.

Two of the men sentenced to death by hanging, merchants Waleed Shahin and Yousef Sabateen, were still at large when the court handed down the verdict. Ismael Al Wahwah, who remained calm throughout the trial, stood up to hear his death sentence. Mr. Wahwah, the two fugitives, and preacher Hilal Shamout were also found guilty of belonging to an illegal group, the ILP, aiming to topple the regime through violence, while the rest were cleared of the charge.

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Despite insistence by the ILP, founded in the West Bank in 1951, that it did not advocate violence to topple regi-

men, the court concluded that the group, which did not apply for licence under the political parties law, believed in using violence to change governments. The court held the party responsible for plotting the assassination and the court cited leaflets distributed by the ILP and sections of the party's political programme as evidence proving that the party advocated violence to topple regimes to be replaced with an Islamic state.

The judge commuted death penalties against Mr. Shamout and Mohammad Odeh Askar of the Royal Escort Unit to life in prison, while death sentences against cadets Hussein Jidi, Basel Zghoul, Ziyad Abdallah, Sejleiman Ziyyoud and Fouad Shdeifat were commuted to 15 years at hard labour.

Col. Amin said that these sentences were commuted because the imam, Mr. Askar and the five cadets were "take advantage of their youth and poverty," and because they did not have previous criminal records.

Most of the defendants heard their sentences quietly. Some nervously grinned. Mr. Jidi told the judge not to bother commuting his sentence, while Mr. Askar made inaudible remarks at the judges and gestured with his hand.

The court found that the confessions made and signed by the eight defendants to Prosecutor Major Mohammad Hizaj were valid and disregarded claims made by the accused that they were tortured into signing the confessions.

The suspects alleged that they were systematically beaten during their three and a half month detention at the

Col. Amin handed down the sentences after the three judges took turns reading a

(Continued on page 5)

Self-rule talks to reopen a day late

TABA, Egypt (Agencies) — The Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy talks are to resume Tuesday, a day later than planned, in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba, a Palestinian negotiator said here Sunday.

Hassan Asfour said that the negotiations were to be delayed 24 hours to allow for more consultations with the PLO headquarters in Tunis.

Economic negotiations in Paris between the PLO and Israel, due to open Sunday, have also been delayed, said the PLO representative to France, Leila Shahid.

U.S. envoy Dennis Ross was expected in Israel late Sunday to brief the Jewish state on the day's summit in Geneva between President Bill Clinton of the United States and President Hafez Al Assad of Syria.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has sent a message to PLO leader Yasser Arafat on the self-rule talks, Palestinian officials in Tunis said Sunday.

The chief PLO negotiator, Nabil Shaath, delivered the message during

Middle East News

Monks, mosque and baptism site caught in Mideast talks

By John West
Reuter

JERICHO — Christ's baptismal site, a ceremonial mosque and a mountain monastery with five Greek monks have suddenly become the front-line of Middle East peace talks.

Palestinians insist these and other sites in the Jordan Valley be handed over with Jericho to a Palestinian self-rule authority.

Israel says no.

What is to be defined as the West Bank oasis town of Jericho is one of several major obstacles blocking implementation of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace accord signed last September. Talks to break the deadlock are due to resume in the Egyptian resort of Taba on Monday.

At first sight, the historic site of Christ's baptism on the banks of the Jordan River, Nabi Moussa Mosque and Qurnatul Monastery seem small spoils when weighed against the risk of further delays — and ultimately the threat of a complete breakdown of the peace process.

But for PLO negotiators they are carefully chosen guarantees to demonstrate that, contrary to the cynical joke of opponents of the peace plan, PLO Chairman

Yasser Arafat has not given up the dream of Palestine to become mayor of Jericho.

Sources close to Palestinian negotiators say each location serves at least two functions.

First, arguing for individual spots on the map is a better lever to boost Jericho's size than the sterile duels of square kilometrage both sides have fought for several months.

Israel started bargaining at 27 square kilometre for the boundaries of Jericho municipality. It has since inched towards about twice that in response to PLO demands for all the area defined as Jericho by Israel's civil.

"If we get all the points we are demanding, the size of Jericho will become at least 100, maybe 150 square kilometres," said Saeb Nazzef, head of Jericho's office of the main PLO faction Fatah.

Second and more important, each new site adds features to make the composite Jericho area look more like a mini-state in the making than just the quiet country town it is now:

The baptismal site would give access to the Jordan River, the border with Jordan. It would also include the Musa Al Alami farm project and another large chunk

If Jericho stretched to

of fertile farming land. The PLO cites its religious importance for Palestinian Christians. It now lies in a closed military zone.

Nabi Moussa, where some believe Moses is buried, would be used by the Palestinian authority as a centre for its police force, PLO officials say.

The 11th century mosque, now visited by 10,000 to 12,000 people a year, could be developed as a tourist site for the millions of Muslims drawn to Islam's third holiest site in nearby Jerusalem, bringing foreign currency into the Palestinian — controlled area.

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Palestinian boys carry a comrade injured during heavy clashes with Israeli troops in the occupied Gaza Strip on Saturday (AFP photo)

Al Oujia, a dusty village eight

kilometres north, it would provide enough fertile land to produce a food surplus and the Oujia "canal", a huge spring of groundwater resources mostly used by nearby Jewish settlements.

One thing the dispute is not about is population centres.

Even if Israel conceded all

land the PLO is asking for,

the population under Palestinian rule would increase only to about 30,000 from the 17,000 within Jericho's town borders — still a fraction of the West Bank's one million Palestinian inhabitants.

But each new feature of the Jericho mini-state is as symbolic for Israel, which insists the agreement is not

about a Palestinian state, as for the Palestinians themselves.

"I will not comment on particular places but for Israel, the idea of including Jericho in the agreement was a gesture to Arafat, a symbol we were not just talking about the Gaza Strip," said an Israeli official who declined to be identified.

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"I will not comment on

NEWS IN BRIEF

Amnesty opens office in Gaza City

GAZA CITY, occupied Gaza Strip (AFP) — The human rights group Amnesty International has opened its first office in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip, an Amnesty official said Sunday. Menno Kemminga, sent from Holland, told reporters that the Gaza office would train Palestinian personnel on monitoring human rights. But the centre will not handle the Gaza Strip itself, in accordance with Amnesty rules, leaving the task to the London headquarters of the organisation, he said. Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat approved the creation of the Amnesty centre in Gaza at a meeting with officials from the human rights organisation on Oct. 2, said Mr. Kemminga. "Mr. Arafat pledged to respect human rights in the occupied territories when the Palestinian authority takes over," Mr. Kemminga said.

Israel approves new airport at Lod

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli government Sunday approved the construction of a new international airport at Lod near Tel Aviv, officials said. The "Ben-Gurion-2000" project, to be completed by 1998 at a cost of \$850 million, will quadruple air traffic through Tel Aviv to a capacity of 16 million passengers per year and serve as a gateway to Asia and Africa. "The government has decided to build a new terminal to meet the great projected increase in the travellers following political developments," an official statement said.

Kurdish rebels claim bus bombings

ANKARA (AP) — Kurdish guerrillas claimed responsibility for bombings on four buses that killed two people and left 15 wounded, a newspaper reported Sunday. Friday's attacks were in retaliation for a military crackdown against the guerrillas of the Kurdish Labour Party in southeastern Turkey, the leftist newspaper Aydinlik said. More than 10,000 people have died in the rebels' 10-year fight for autonomy in the Kurdish-dominated southeast. Over the past two weeks, the crackdown has left 134 Kurdish guerrillas and 14 troops dead. Aydinlik said the separatists claimed responsibility for the bombings by telephoning a Germany-based pro-Kurdish news agency, Kurt-A. The sister of the Turkish chief of staff, General Dogan Gures, was on one of the buses, but was unharmed. The rebels said they planted bombs on the buses carrying government officials, Aydinlik reported.

Libya backs China over U.N. enlargement

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya came out Saturday in support of China's refusal to let Germany and Japan become permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. A Libyan Foreign Ministry source, quoted by the official Libyan news agency JANA, expressed "satisfaction and support" for China which said Thursday that any reform of the Security Council required changing the U.N. charter and would therefore have to be discussed by all U.N. members. "The Chinese position is that of Libya which wants a reform of the U.N. so as to give all people a role in decision-making on a fair and equal basis," the source said. JANA said that "since the U.N. has become an instrument in the service of the big powers, the small nations fear for their future." It said Libya, which has been under a U.N. embargo since April 1992 because of its alleged reluctance to cooperate in investigating two aircraft bombings, was among those "which have suffered from this situation."

70 hijack attempts thwarted by Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has thwarted 70 hijack attempts over the past ten years, a senior member of the Guardians of the Revolution para-military organisation was quoted Saturday as saying. General Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, quoted by IRNA news agency, said that "all the hijackers were killed, wounded or arrested" by Pasdaran Revolutionary Guards aboard the aircraft. At the end of November, a Fokker-27 chartered by the Iranian Oil Ministry was hijacked to Basra in Iraq with 35 passengers and crew. The hijacker, his wife and five children were given political asylum by Baghdad.

Arab Fund lends Yemen \$47 million

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) on Saturday extended a loan to Yemen of around \$47 million to shore up a deficit in its 1993 balance of payments, the AMF said. AMF Chairman Osama Al Faqih and Yemeni Ambassador in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Mohammad Al Khawi signed the loan agreement at the fund's headquarters in Abu Dhabi, the AMF said in a statement. It brought to 17 the number of loans provided by the AMF to Yemen with a value of nearly \$215 million, it said. It gave no details of the agreement but the AMF extends soft-term loans to its 21 member states to help them tackle their balance of payment deficits. Saturday's loan was the first by the AMF in more than a year as it is suffering from arrears of more than \$600 million owed mainly by Iraq and Sudan. They account for nearly half the fund's capital. The AMF, the Arab League's main lending arm, has provided around \$2.4 billion in loans to members since it was created in 1976.

Iran announces first local helicopter

NICOSIA (R) — The first military helicopter manufactured in Iran will be put into operation by the end of the current calendar year, ending March 20, an official was quoted as saying. Reza Irankish, head of the industrial department of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, was quoted by the Iranian news agency IRNA as saying on Saturday that all parts of the two-seater helicopter except the engine were made in Iran. IRNA did not give any other details. It quoted Mr. Irankish as saying that the Revolutionary Guards were "engaged in military research, which included building and revitalising military equipment... various kinds of boats, landing craft and cargo and military vessels were among the equipment being produced."



An October 1992 photo shows Israeli tanks training on the occupied Golan Heights (AFP photo)

Golan is at core of Syria-Israel logjam

DAMASCUS (R) — The Golan Heights, seized by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, were at the core of Sunday's Geneva summit between U.S. President Bill Clinton and Syria's Hafez Al Assad.

Syrian troops came with a

whisker of retaking the bleak

and windswept plateau in 1973.

Israel has always feared a surprise attack on its positions

overlooking the road to

Damascus.

U.N. soldiers stand between

the rival forces in the area,

barely an hour's drive from

Syria's capital and 3½ from

occupied Jerusalem.

Syria has left the town in

ruins to show the world how

the Israelis deliberately wrecked it before withdrawing from

additional territory seized in

1973 war.

The U.N.-patrolled strip on

the Syrian side of the 1967

ceasefire line tapers from 14

kilometres wide at the

Lebanese border to 500 metres

where it meets Jordan.

Its 14,000 residents include

members of the minority

Druze Muslim sect. They keep

in touch with relatives on the

Israeli side by shouting

through megaphones across

500 metres of minefields and

tank traps. It is under Syrian

civil control and military forces

are barred.

Any peace deal acceptance

to both sides would almost

certainly include similar

arrangements to keep their

armies well apart and prevent

any surprise attack.

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The information is supplied by Royal

Jordanian (RJ) information depart-

ment at the Queen Alia Interna-

tional Airport Tel. 06/3530455,



SIGNING CULTURAL SCIENTIFIC AGREEMENT: Jordan and the Republic of Kirghizstan Sunday concluded an agreement on cooperation in cultural and scientific fields. The agreement, signed by Minister of Higher Education Saeed Tell (right) and visiting Kirghiz Minister of Higher Education Askar Kakiev provides for cultural and scientific institutions to be involved in promoting such cooperation. The two sides will exchange scholarships for higher studies in each other's institutions, expertise, information and university textbooks as well as publications and visits by students and professors. They will also organise training

courses for visiting students and conduct joint educational programmes. The Kirghiz minister expressed his satisfaction with the agreement, noting that his visit to Jordan over the past week was very beneficial to him and his accompanying delegation. Mr. Kakiev, who later left for home early Sunday, visited the King Abdullah Mosque in Amman and toured the permanent Hashemite exhibition set up by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs at the mosque. The Kirghiz minister had toured several educational institutions and met other government officials including Minister of Education Khaled Al Omari (Petra photo)

Visiting Taiwanese team tours RSS

AMMAN (J.T.) — Director of the Economic and Trade Affairs Department at the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs B.Y. Lu Sunday headed a Taiwanese delegation on a visit to the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and was received by RSS President Hani Mulki. RSS Vice President Said Alloosh and several officials.

The two sides discussed scopes of technical cooperation, and the guest delegation was briefed on RSS projects conducted in cooperation with

Taiwanese scientific institutions.

They also reviewed work achieved in the project of the Electronic Engineering Section of the RSS Princess Sumaya University College for Technology regarding the equipment delivered recently as technical aid by the Taiwanese government.

They reached agreement on a programme for the delivery of other technical equipment scheduled to be sent by the Taiwanese government.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Senate to discuss House budget endorsement

AMMAN (Petra) — The Upper House of Parliament today (Monday) will hold a meeting to discuss several issues including a letter by Lower House Speaker Taher Al Masri on the House endorsement of the 1994 budget. The Upper House will also discuss the Legal Committee's decisions on the revised Military Pension Law, the Provisional Law on Civil Courts and the Provisional Law of the Formation of civil courts.

Tourism minister visits RJ Amsterdam office

AMSTERDAM (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Mohammad Adwan Sunday visited the Royal Jordanian (RJ) offices here and was briefed on the development of tourism to Jordan from the Scandinavian countries and the RJ plans to meet increasing tourist demand. Mr. Adwan praised RJ's role in promoting tourism to Jordan and lauded the close cooperation between the national air carrier, the ministry and the tourism sector in Jordan, saying that such cooperation was behind the increased number of tourists to the Kingdom.

PSD chief honours retirees

AMMAN (Petra) — Director of the Public Security Department (PSD) General Abdul Rahim Al Adwan Sunday honoured several public security officers who recently retired. Addressing the officers Gen. Adwan thanked them for their dedicated efforts and their role in maintaining security and safeguarding development.

University, Air Force sign communication agreement

AMMAN (Petra) — AL al Bayt University and

the Royal Air Force Corps Sunday signed an agreement under which the corps will provide 30 telephone channels linking the university site in Mafrid with the Air Force telecommunications station in Amman. The corps will also carry out the necessary maintenance on the telecommunications equipment, in addition to the main cable linking the university with the Air Force telecommunications station. Signing the agreement for the university was president Mohammad Adnan Al Bakheit and for the Air Force Corps the director of the Electronic Telecommunications Department.

Yarmouk U. receives Dutch book donation

IRBID (Petra) — Yarmouk University President Marwan Kamal Sunday received 230 books on archaeology donated by the Dutch government to the university's Antiquities and Anthropology Institute. The books are written in German, English and Dutch. Presenting the books was Netherlands Honorary Consul Raouf Abu Jaber, who voiced hope for continued cooperation between the university and Dutch universities, particularly in areas such as history and humanistic sciences.

Water resources protection competition announced

AMMAN (Petra) — Protecting, maintaining and developing water resources was the theme of a competition announced by the Council of Arab Ministers of Environment, according to the Environment Department at the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment. Under the competition an Arab award will be granted to the best work on maintaining and developing water resources, rationing their use and preventing contamination. The deadline for receiving such works is the end of April.

outbreaks of contagious diseases.

A recent report by the U.N. food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) spoke of pre-famine indicators and an impending agricultural calamity in Iraq.

"The present mission ... notes with deep concern the prevalence of several commonly recognised pre-famine indicators," said the report published in the government's English-language daily, the Baghdad Observer.

The government is telling people to do all it can to ease their sanctions-related suffering.

But also maintains economic deprivation will in no way force it to accept terms it describes as humiliating.

"We shall not succumb to force...we shall not lay down arms no matter the sacrifices," said Al Jumhouriyah.

Baghdad has rejected two U.N. resolutions to export \$1.6 billion worth of oil to pay for urgent humanitarian needs and U.N. costs, saying the conditions violate its sovereignty.

(Continued from page 1)

the lesson of the past and absorb their meanings," he said.

The speech was President Saddam's toughest towards the West in about a year.

"They should remember that the will of the Almighty is stronger than theirs and then the will of their devils, and that the fate of criminals is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

The Iraqi artillery will fire 21-gun salutes five times on Monday and Iraqi workers have been urged to work an extra hour "in response to the aggression and the unfair embargo."

At 2:30 a.m. on Jan. 17, three years after the U.S.-led multinational alliance unleashed a massive missile and air attack on Baghdad to force it out of Kuwait, 10,000 Iraqi youths will march in a candle procession in the streets of Baghdad.

Life will come to standstill for five minutes and shouts of

"Allah Akbar" and chimes of church bells will echo over Baghdad.

Baghdad newspapers appeared on Sunday with lengthy articles on the merits of the mother of all battles.

"The mother of battles has humiliated America," said the government newspaper Al Jumhouriyah in a front-page editorial.

Three years after the 1991 Gulf war that forced Iraqi troops out of Kuwait and compelled Iraq to accept the dismantling of its weapons of mass destruction and long-term U.N. arms control and monitoring, Baghdad still says it has nothing to regret.

The U.N. trade sanctions imposed to punish Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait are causing widespread deprivation.

Official statistics blame about 400,000 deaths on the embargo and U.N. officials in Baghdad say water and sanitation systems in Baghdad are now in shambles leading to

outbreaks of contagious diseases. A recent report by the U.N. food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) spoke of pre-famine indicators and an impending agricultural calamity in Iraq.

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Price of poultry meat increases

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prices of poultry meat Sunday increased by nearly five per cent, according to an announcement by the Ministry of Supply.

Poultry meat sold by the Amman Municipality slaughterhouse will rise from 1,240 fils per kilo to 1,300 fils per kilo, and that sold by the Duleil slaughterhouse will sell at 1,400 fils up from 1,360 fils per kilo, said the announcement.

The ministry attributed the price increase to the low supply of poultry meat to local markets; a normal occurrence during winter when production declines, added the ministry.

It said the cost of production is higher in winter because poultry farms require extra heating to protect chickens from low night temperatures.

The announcement said the price increase would compensate the farmers for extra expenses incurred and the loss of some of their chickens.

The compensation also covers farmers' losses normally incurred in the summer when poultry meat prices drop.

The ministry said it would maintain its price monitoring and ensure that sufficient quantities of poultry meat are available to consumers.

Should there be an unjustified increase in the price, however, the ministry said it would release part of the frozen poultry meat now in store at ministry warehouses in order to meet local market needs.

Trade union group elects new officials

AMMAN (Petra) — The International Federation of Arab Trade Unions (IFATU) has elected Hassan Hamam of Algeria as secretary general of IFATU and Fawzi Doss as chairman of the Central Committee of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions and the committee's member Ahmad Wanis as member of the IFATU Central Council, according to Mr. Doss who has just come back from Tunis after attending the Seventh General Conference of the federation last week.

Mr. Doss said the conference made a set of recommendations designed to ensure the independence of trade unions and enhance Arab work in the fields of labour culture and strengthen cooperation with international trade union federations.

The conference called for intensifying efforts to defend causes of immigrant workers and strengthen their relations with their home countries.

It also stressed the need to improve the living and working conditions of workers.

Mr. Doss added that the conferees called for augmenting efforts to lift the embargo currently imposed on the Iraqi people and to safeguard the unity of Yemen.

Mr. Doss has said that

U.S. commerce chief arrives today Meetings to explore enhancing economic ties

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown arrives here early today (Monday) on the first visit of a U.S. commerce chief to the Kingdom in more than a decade. The visit is described as aimed at exploring possibilities of enhanced economic cooperation between the U.S. and Jordan in light of the progress in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

Mr. Brown, who will land at Marka Civilian Airport arriving from Saudi Arabia, is scheduled to hold a round of talks with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali shortly after his arrival. The meeting at the prime ministry is expected to be attended by other members of the Cabinet, including Finance Minister Sami Hammoud, Planning Minister Ziad Fariz and Industry and Trade Minister Rima Khalaf, Mr. Brown's counterpart.

The U.S. Secretary of Commerce will visit a private sector firm for a firsthand look at Jordanian industry before being received by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Mr. Brown will also address a gathering at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC) on human rights and democracy and a meeting organised by the Jordan Businessmen's Association before leaving for Israel late Monday or early Tuesday.

One of the main themes of Mr. Brown's current Middle East visit, which began in Saudi Arabia and ends in Egypt, is "business matchmaking" between U.S. businesses and regional firms as a means to advance economic development parallel to the peace process.

Mr. Brown has said that

"I ask each of you to consider what more we can do to put the issue behind us and to enable American companies to contribute to the economic development of all in the region.

By removing the secondary boycotts —

U.S. businesses were wary of investing in the Middle East in the absence of Arab-Israeli peace. He argued that now that the peace process has made progress, it is time the "comfort level ... the confidence level" of American businessmen is raised in the region to induce investments.

Mr. Brown has said that Washington was cooperating with "Builders of Peace," a group of Arab-American and Jewish-American businessmen who have shown interest in investing in the occupied territories.

At the same time, Mr. Brown is also pushing for an end to the Arab economic boycott of Israel, an idea that will find resistance in Jordan, which believes that such a move is not feasible and does not make political and economic sense at this point in time, particularly that the peace process has not yet reached a stage where an overall peace accord could be concluded among the Arabs and Israel.

"The U.S. is going to continue to push to eliminate all boycotts and I am going to press it with all the leaders with (whom) I meet, as I have done before, and as President Clinton has done," Mr. Brown said before he began the Middle East visit.

Addressing a U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) seminar on trade in Riyadh on Sunday, Mr. Brown followed up on this theme.

"The boycott issue is one that cries to be solved," he said.

"I ask each of you to consider what more we can do to put the issue behind us and to enable American companies to contribute to the economic development of all in the region.

Among the key topics for Mr. Brown's discussions in Amman are prospects for American investment in Jordan and joint ventures as well as the functions of the joint Jordanian-American-Israeli economic working group formed during Prince Has-

san's visit to Washington in October.

Also explored will be an idea for an international conference on investment in Middle Eastern projects as part of measures to boost the peace process.

Answering questions from journalists from the Middle East shortly before he launched the Middle East trip, Mr. Brown promised to look into a report compiled by Jordanian businessmen on the impact of the de facto blockade on Aqaba port as part of the enforcement of the international sanctions against Iraq.

He declined, however, to be specific when asked whether Washington would be considering any specific measure to alleviate the impact on Jordan's economy.

Mr. Brown is accompanied by a U.S. trade delegation including administration officials and representatives of American firms.

The commerce secretary has agreed that there had to be a better "equilibrium" in trade between the U.S. and Jordan, which bought more than \$300 million in American products in 1993 while exporting less than \$5 million.

"I understand that a commercial relationship is a two-way street ... there has to be an equilibrium... and that is what we are trying to create..." he said.

The U.S. official said he and the businessmen accompanying him were looking forward to "creative kinds of proposals" from their interlocutors in the region.

"We are going to establish direct contacts between American businessmen and Jordanian, Palestinian, Israeli and Saudi businessmen," he said.

Forestry official urges public to help in afforestation project

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition on the art of architecture at the French Cultural Centre.

★ Photo exhibition by artist Muwaffaq Al Shehhi at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Art exhibition by artist Sadik Kwaish entitled "Talisman" at Baladna Art Gallery.

★ Exhibition of Iraqi books at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Permanent exhibition of contemporary Arab artists and "Chair" exhibition at Darat Al Funun of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luweibden.

FILMS

★ Film entitled "Angel Heart" at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 6:00 p.m.

★ Short film entitled "Clumsy" at the French Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

★ Film entitled "Le Nom De La Rose" at the French Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.

★ Film entitled "The Lessons To Be Learned From The Gulf War" by Dr. Fayed Al Fanek, Dr. Ya'acob Zayadin, and Mr. Salah Al Makhtar at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 6:00 p.m.

★ Lecture entitled "The Architectural and Urban Development of Early Islamic Jerusalem: A Study Through Computer-aided Design Programmes" by Dr. Mohammad El-Assad of Al Al Bayt University at the Friend of Archaeology Centre at 7:00 p.m.

LECTURES & SEMINARS

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Jordan Times

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The issue beyond 1994 budget

LOWER HOUSE of Parliament deputies are not to blame for asking the government to improve the salaries of civil servants, to provide health insurance for all citizens and to reduce taxes at the same time. These are popular demands everywhere, not only in a country like Jordan with limited resources. The deputies though might sound unrealistic. Yet looking at the result of voting — 56 for the draft budget and 20 against — the number of deputies who chose to give the government a vote of confidence over its fiscal policies has increased by 15 deputies since the Majali government won the first vote of confidence in early December.

However, as prime minister Abdul Salam Majali has put it, the government would need several times of the budget to meet deputies' demands for schools, roads, hospitals and other services for their constituencies. Dr. Majali's cynicism should not blind us to the fact that most of the deputies' demands are legitimate and in some cases even urgent. The government itself has found that 21 per cent of Jordanian families are under the poverty line and that unemployment is above 15 per cent. These figures in themselves are alarming. There is also no denial that a sizeable number of the civil servants themselves are among the poor, and that most of the unemployed aspire for jobs in the government.

The government and the people's representatives seem to be avoiding to tackle the real issue: That the Jordanian economy has for decades thrived on external aid and, in the last two decades, on expatriate remittances and that both sources of income had to do with the role Jordan was expected to play in the region. Now that roles are changing, we in Jordan have to adapt and rely on ourselves. The economic crisis that successive governments have skillfully managed to steer us through must have taught us a valuable lesson: Dependence on external financial resources is a costly matter.

That is why our honourable deputies ought to look beyond the immediate implications of this year's fiscal budget and any hopes for imminent Arab reconciliation and resumption of Arab aid. Jordanians have over the years proven to be shrewd politicians and businessmen. What they need is to be freed from the shackles of government bureaucracy in order for them to excel and create wealth for the nation. What deputies and government alike should aim for is a self-sufficient Jordan free from all the constraints that come with foreign, or Arab, aid. Towards this goal this year's budget has been a step in the right direction.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IT IS in an atmosphere of optimism that presidents Clinton and Assad meet in Geneva where all eyes are turned to watch for some progress or momentum to be given to the Middle East peace process, said Al Ra's Sunday. It goes without saying that the Syrian president would present Mr. Clinton with Syria's views and demands of a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights so that a permanent peace can be achieved with Israel, said the daily. On the eve of the meeting, Syria coordinated its stand with Jordan and the other Arab parties involved in the peace process and it is reasonable to believe that the Syrian leader would also carry to Geneva the views of the Arab parties as a whole, added the paper. A United Arab stand would no doubt give the Arabs a strong bargaining position with the U.S. president who, in turn, can wield influence over the Jewish state and demand compliance with the U.N. resolutions, it added. The paper said that Syria's position and those of the Palestinians and Jordan and Lebanon are quite clear as the Arabs are demanding an end to occupation in exchange for peace with Israel. Israel's procrastinations and delay in implementing U.N. resolutions can change nothing and would not force the Arabs to give up their rights and their demands for end of occupation, said the paper. The paper expressed hope that Mr. Clinton would bring pressure on Israel to comply with the U.N. resolutions on which the Madrid peace conference was based.

SAWT AL SHAAB daily described as a healthy sign the lengthy debate in Parliament over the 1994 fiscal budget, noting that the discussion was a big sign of democratic life. The four-day debate, which ended with the budget, was a model of democratic exercise and the high participation in the past days reflected the increasing sound practices by the country's finance minister, Abdul Salam al-Sa'id, who did not negate the year's budget, the paper stressed. The paper made clear that it has made progress in the budget, the paper stressed.

Strength for the Arabs lies in unity and democracy

By Izzat R. Dajani

There is nothing I learnt to dislike more than certain proverbs, mottos or names for quasi-institutions that signified a lot but ended up meaning nothing. These include: The New Arab Order, Arab Cooperation Council, Council of Arab Economic Unity, Arab body and Arab unity. For many years, slogans substituted the truth and masked the reasons that led to the formation of Arabs in nearly every aspect of development, be it the economic, military, cultural, scientific or social.

The Arab World has fallen in its own trap by the persistent description of its past military failures as successes and victories. It persisted in the flawed economic, political and social dimension which in turn carried very serious consequences that helped further deteriorate the fragile Arab body. The real problem has been the constant masking of the many structural cracks leading in turn to diminishing hopes improvement or measured advancement.

We live in a world where many of its nations achieved tangible results and rose to super levels of power. Ironically, much of this was possible only after these same nations suffered military defeats that carried massive destruction with varying degrees of damage to the many structural orders in any society. There are many examples to draw conclusions from and include countries such as Germany, Japan and Italy. However, military defeats contributed dramatically to economic, political and social successes in these nations, as shortfalls were seriously addressed after the war. Such factors had never been addressed, analysed or even considered in the Arab World.

It is imperative that one should look ahead while drawing from examples and incidences in the past. This is important so as not to hinder the process of improvement and advancement towards a better self and an even better society.

Strategists conclude that power is composed of five different resources: military, economic, political, cultural and technological and scientific. When a country has the full range of power resources together with the will to use them and the ability to pull them together, then that country possesses the criteria of a superpower. Only the United States at present can pass for that as all the potential challengers are deficient in some respect regarding these power resources. Russia and East European countries lag economically; China's political sys-

tem is frail; Europe lacks political unity; Japan is deficient militarily, with a culture that does not carry a global appeal. It is equally important that power resources also form the seeds and define the ingredients of unity: the more the resources and the ability to pull them together, the stronger the chances for unity within a nation or group of nations.

Ironically, the Arab World constantly speaks of language and religion as its two main resources for power and unity, although these two criteria are not so defined by the international strategists — valid example is the European Community which is made up of countries with different languages and varied forms of Christianity and religions, but united in interest. However, we are willing to accept the argument that the Arab World remains united in language, religion and possibly culture. But it definitely lacks almost every other resource of power — its science and technology are imported and so is its military hardware and capability: there is a disparity in wealth without any clearly defined

mense resources that can provide the required human and capital impetus. Through Arab regional cooperation, a mechanism can be started so as to provide momentum that incorporates in the process many forms of cooperation in various fields. These may include finance, education, industry, agriculture and others.

To simply focus on geographic unity as the sole aspiration of Arabs will certainly nullify this mechanism and its resulted momentum and render the whole process futile. One must always elevate the possible above the ideal to make things work.

The Arab World needs to embark on massive plans for further building its infrastructure. This requires immense spending and high levels of planning and allocation of resources whether scarce or in abundance. The Arab World is characterised by unfair and unjust distribution of wealth. Due to colonial, "artificial" divisions and transparent boundaries, the Arab World was partitioned in a most bizarre manner. Nearly 95 per cent of Arab wealth is controlled by

"Democratic rule is the vital artery for improving the Arab body. Many lessons in democracy and humanity can be drawn from Arab and Islamic history which can apply closer to the area and its needs than simply introducing and adopting western ideas."

outward-looking economic policies: total disunity is prevailing politically: Arab culture is alien to the industrialised West, and Islam is totally misunderstood and misrepresented. There is a compelling need for the Arab World to start building its power resources and pulling them together with the added advantages of the one-religion, one-language phenomenon. It needs to find a mechanism that works, away from the one-nation, one-body slogan. Maybe it needs to think of itself as a group with common destiny and shared interest — the Group of Arab Nations (GAN).

In this context, the Arab League was a dying body from the day of its onset. It was founded under the auspices of the colonising powers and its charter contributed more to diversity than unity. The league received its most serious and possibly fatal challenge from the Gulf war. Henceforth, GAN needs to focus on Arab unity through cooperation and shared interest rather than pure geographic welding. Overtly gains have to supersede any differences, and regional interests replace narrowly-drawn national benefits. The overall Arab economy contains im-

portant 5 per cent of the Arab people. To further compound this, much of the Arab petrodollars are fed back into the industrialised world financial systems and institutions. Arab investments fell far short of contributing to Arab advancement, and led widening the gap between rich and poor. Bitterness characterised this outcome. GAN needs to establish and implement projects of development across the Arab World. It needs to invest in various Arab countries so as to improve particular skills, natural resources or human capabilities that characterise each country and control each investment. It is ludicrous that the great majority of Arabs have to live ascetically whilst Arab money is deposited in the industrialised West. The status quo between the haves and have-nots certainly needs addressing.

We live in a global world where many countries share interests and drive benefits. It is also a world where the big and powerful control the destiny of the small and weak. No one Arab country, no matter how vast its resources are, can

claim a self-chosen destiny in this global environment. But the whole Arab World in its unity can. It can deal with nations on shared interests and benefits. It can demand respect as equal. It can impose its ideas, demand its security and seek out justice. The Gulf war confirmed the asininity of the reliance by many Arab countries on supposedly "eternal friends" in this world.

GAN needs to consider many more issues. It needs to establish a defensive mechanism against the "modern-era colonialism". It needs to transfer technology and adapt it to suit its requirements in building its institutions and designing its future better. By simply importing technology from the industrialised West, the Arab World will be permanently dependent on countries responsible for such technology. It also has to seriously consider this as a priority issue for Arab independence. This secures henceforth the livelihood of future generations and guarantees dignified living.

A strong group of Arab nations guarantees there can never be global silence to ignored Arab rights, lost humanity and denied justice. The plight of the Palestinians must never be ignored as Palestine was, and will always be, an integral part of the Arab World, and its people can and should contribute to its advancement and cohesion.

Last but not least, GAN has to provide the foundation for democracy and its application in the Arab World. This is the biggest, probably most serious challenge of all. Much of the prospective and potential leadership is destroyed in the undemocratic process in most parts of the Arab World. This leaves a continuous vacuum as countries do not provide the basis for people to carry the responsibility and continue the process where others' accomplishments end. People have to be represented as much as authority is recognised for the benefit of the nation as a whole. By centring power with the elite, social and technological advancement is curtailed as this minority grouping constantly denies the population what may form a source of challenge to the elite's many self-bestowed privileges. To make society advance, all its members should perform their role as best they can. This performance is the biggest source of strength for every Arab country.

Democratic rule is the vital artery for improving the Arab body. Many lessons in democracy and humanity can be drawn from Arab and Islamic history which can apply closer to the area and its needs than simply introducing and adopting western ideas.

The trap of safe havens for Kurds

By Michael Jansen

THREE YEARS after the launch of the Gulf war which led to the establishment of a "safe haven" for Iraq's Kurds in the north of the country, the western-protected area is neither "safe" nor a "haven".

A brain drain caused by the emigration of educated men and professionals from "Free Kurdistan" has forced the Kurdish authorities to impose stringent restrictions on people wishing to leave. It is ironic that the Kurdish administration, which claims to be democratic, has had to follow the undemocratic example of Baghdad and require inhabitants of the "haven" to acquire an exit permit before travelling abroad via Turkey or Iran.

Middle class families have been leaving in large numbers because of both economic hardship and insecurity.

"Free Kurdistan" is a poor, mountainous region which has no major natural resource to earn it the foreign currency it requires to buy the capital and consumer goods it needs. The area has been ravaged by decades of warfare and much of its infrastructure destroyed. To make matters worse, the Kurds live under a double blockade: the first imposed by the western powers against Iraq through the U.N. sanctions regime and the second by Baghdad to punish the Kurds for their rebellion against the government and their alliance with the West. The 2.2 million Kurds (out of a total Iraqi population of 4 million) who live in the "haven" suffer from lack of basic foodstuffs and medicine, shortage of electric power and massive unemployment due to a low level of economic activity.

The economic situation has grown steadily worse because western donors, experiencing "compassion fatigue" and loss of interest in a chronic crisis, have cut financial assistance to the "haven". Furthermore, since last summer, the "total war" between the Marxist Kurdish Workers Party (the PPK) and the Turkish army has disrupted the illegal transit trade in Iraqi oil smuggled to Turkey which provided "Free Kurdistan" with an independent income.

The war in eastern Turkey has spilled over into northern Iraq. The Iraqi Kurds have received thousands of refugees and fighters driven across the frontier by the Turkish army seeking to suppress a separatist insurgency

When nothing is left to lose, violence may break loose

By Zeid Zalatimo

Watching the news on Friday night one could not help but remember David Koresh, spiritual leader of the Branch Davidians and his hold up in Waco, Texas last winter. The Friday night siege was in Hebron, where the alleged leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement for the Hebron area was held up with three other alleged Hamas members.

The main similarity of this siege with Waco is the use of force by the authorities. In Waco, David Koresh led his followers to mass suicide, using some Biblical references to ensure them eternal salvation. His followers, numbering over 100, were armed to the teeth with automatic weapons and explosives. The Branch Davidian compound was besieged after agents from the Narcotics and Firearms Administration were attacked while issuing a search warrant for illegal possession of firearms. Two agents were killed, three were injured. What followed was a two-month-long stand off in which the compound was surrounded by armored vehicles and hundreds of law enforcement agents.

Like the Hamas held up in Hebron, the images coming from Waco resembled a war-front. Law enforcement agencies were obsessed with David Koresh. One could not help but question the reasons behind the attack and the subsequent siege of the compound, other than the embarrassment Koresh caused the Narcotics and Firearms Administration, whose agents were not adequately prepared to deal with the Branch Davidians. More importantly, Koresh's follow-



ers made American law enforcement agents look bad on national TV.

The Israeli army was not quite as patient as its American counterparts. Friday's siege lasted for one hour and a half, the attack on the house was swift, and deadly. Other than the outcome, it is unclear exactly how the events unfolded. An Israeli army spokesman stated that the "terrorists" had escaped from a military prison and were hiding in the house which was subsequently surrounded by the Israeli military. Contrary to army reports, neighbours say that the house was rented by engineering students from Hebron Technical College, who "... surrendered after 90 minutes with their hands up," as one eyewitness said. In any case, what ensued was a barrage of Israeli artillery and mortar attacks, from land and

helicopter. Four Palestinian activists were killed, all suspected Hamas activists.

Palestinian activists have embarrassed the Israeli army for the past four years and more significantly during the last two years. During last year, Hamas activists have been engaging the army in armed conflicts sporadically but with increasing resilience, as the deadline for Palestinian semi-autonomy approaches. In response, the Israeli army is also increasing the level of brutality with which it combats any acts of resistance. The army lit the night over Hebron with flares, placed the town under total curfew, attacked the house held up by the activists with helicopter artillery and mortar, shoulder-launched rockets and automatic fire.

Friday was a fantastic display of the extent to which the IDF will go to ensure a "peaceful" transition to the semi-autonomous enclaves. This is quite consistent with Yitzhak Rabin's Iron Fist policy which he initiated as defence minister at the beginning of the intifada, in 1987. This policy has basically been the "break their bone" "if there are no more to break" doctrine which has governed Israel's policy in the occupied territories throughout the intifada.

Now, in the post-intifada, pre-semi-autonomous stage, the Israeli army is carrying out attacks on activists, such as shoot-to-kill, targeting any masked activists, deploying agents in "Arab" garb to act as a fifth column during demonstrations, and now the Hebron siege. The implications of the siege are dangerous. It is the first time since 1967 that the Israeli military has used air and mortar to attack Palestinians in the occupied territories. The

use of such weapons is significant in that it goes beyond conventional Israeli use of force. I believe it marks the beginning of a new phase of Israeli occupation policy: to use full, and decisive military force against Palestinian activists. In which case we can expect to see a significant escalation of Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets and brutal Israeli counterattacks.

Palestinian activists (Hamas and other factions) have actively opposed to occupation and to the peace accords. Will they have to give up or die? Constructive steps towards peace do not include barbaric military sieges and placing entire towns under house arrest. They do not include shooting twelve demonstrators in Gaza (Jan. 15, 1994).

Israel and the PLO can no longer afford to overlook the growing number of militant opponents to the peace accords. Waco-style sieges will lead to Waco-style results and are a counterproductive method of dealing with such elements, particularly at a time when many feel they have nothing to lose. Because, in the final analysis, jihad is a viable option. The writer is an Amman-based businessman. He contributed the above comment to the Jordan Times.

Features

Peres said trying to keep Jerusalem Post in check

SHIMON Peres, the Israeli foreign minister, has declared war on the right-wing Jerusalem Post newspaper by cancelling 1,100 ministry subscriptions, because the paper is undermining the government's peace efforts, writes Sarah Helm. Mr. Peres, the chief architect of the Gaza-Jericho accord, has been angered by the antagonistic attitude taken by the paper to Israel's deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Peres is not concerned about the Jerusalem Post's influence on domestic public opinion, but rather the effect it may have on opinion abroad. As the only Israeli English-language daily, it is an international opinion-former. The paper has been distributed free at Israeli embassies.

The Jerusalem Post, which used to have a dovish editorial line, supporting the Labour Party, moved to the far right under Conrad Black, who bought the Post in 1989 when the hawkish Likud party was in power. Mr. Black also owns the Daily and Sunday Telegraph.

Publicly, the foreign ministry insists the subscription cancellation is simply cost-cutting exercise. However, ministry sources close to Mr. Peres saw there are strong political motives. Mr. Peres is reported to be "furious" at the editorial line taken by the paper. "His view is — why should we help the enemy," according to one official.

Israel is keen to bolster in-

3 sentenced to death; 7 jailed

(Continued from page 1)

GID before they were transferred to Zarka military prison in August and that they were coerced by GID officers into signing confessions given to Maj. Hijazi.

The court, however, said that the testimony of the clerk who wrote down the defendants' statements proved that only Maj. Hijazi, the clerk and one defendant at a time were present during the prosecution questioning, contradicting claims by the accused that a GID officer was present and issuing threats during the questioning.

The judges also said that testimonies by other witnesses who were detained at the GID, including Mr. Abu Risha and Mr. Khawaleh, who denied they were beaten or abused during their detention at the GID, made the panel conclude that there was no evidence to prove the defendants were actually tortured. The court also noted that the doctors who checked the defendants for signs of torture in October did not prove that they were physically abused.

More than two dozen men were detained at the GID in April and May in connection with the plot, but most of them were released.

The presiding judge reminded the defence that the verdict could now be appealed. Defence lawyers later told reporters that they would immediately appeal the verdict in the court of appeals, a civil court, where the whole case would be heard again.

This would be the first security case to be appealed since

Assad: Normal ties possible

(Continued from page 1)

The American president said he was confident that progress would be made at the resumption of talks between Israel and Syria in Washington next week.

Asked if Mr. Assad had provided assurances he was willing to give Israel open borders, free trade and diplomatic relations, Mr. Clinton said: "The short answer is yes."

Israel has demanded such assurances before it offers any "territorial concessions." The Jewish state has long insisted it would not turn over the Golan Heights, strategic land it seized from Syria in the 1967 war.

Syria's immediate goal is the return of the Heights.

The United States and Syria have a complicated relationship: although Syria is on the U.S. State Department's list of nations that support terrorism, Mr. Assad worked to help free American hostages held for years in Beirut and backed the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war.

Mr. Clinton and Mr. Assad spoke of each other in complimentary terms, with Mr. Assad paying tribute to the American leader's pursuit of peace in the Middle East, and Mr. Clinton noting the Syrian leader had demonstrated his longstanding reputation for stamina in their talks.

Mr. Clinton said Mr. Assad

The other side of human rights: tidal wave of unfit water

By Waleed Sadi

Countries and peoples are by and large obsessed by political dimensions of human rights at the expense of other human rights aspects that could be sometimes infinitely more pressing. A good case in point is the water situation in Gaza Strip which apparently is not drawing much attention from any side, including the Israelis who govern the area as well as the Palestinian leadership which aims to acquire effective control over the strip.

It has been brought to my attention at a recent international conference organised by Israeli scientists that due to extensive well-drilling in the Gaza area, the water condition has deteriorated to such an extent that it threatens epidemics, and possibly kidney failure on a mass scale. It seems that the water quality there has deteriorated considerably in recent years due to excessive drilling brought about by changing the chemical composition of the water.

Of course, the Israeli side would put the blame on the Palestinians for overdrilling. In part, they are correct, to the extent that the Palestinian leadership should have shown some degree of appreciation of the problem by raising the issue with their own people as well as with the Israeli occupying authorities. While the primary responsibilities with the Israeli government, it cannot be overemphasised for allowing, in the first place, the water situation in Gaza Strip to deteriorate to such an extent as to require extensive drilling. There should be no escape from the conclusion that the PLO itself should shoulder part of the responsibility.

When the Israeli scientists attending the above-mentioned conference talked about the problem as looming dangerously on the horizon, none of the Palestinian or other Arab

participants responded in any manner as to suggest the least concern. In a way, this Arab disrespect for the quality of life of their people under occupation could be explained more in cultural terms since in the developing countries environmental considerations have yet to attain the degree of prominence.

We have seen this dire neglect bordering on criminal negligence in many Arab states where the quality of water their peoples drink and use is never seen as a high priority issue. The same goes for food contamination, especially when insecticides or pesticides are used indiscriminately, without real control by the concerned authorities.

Human Rights File

But to get back to the Gaza case, it appears that the water situation there has already reached an alarming point where it could affect the majority of the half a million Gazans during the upcoming years. What is the sense of gaining political freedom if the people concerned are doomed to die from diseases?

The right to life comes ahead of all other human rights aspirations, according to all existing human rights conventions and treaties. When there is no life, there can be no freedom or independence or an opportunity to exercise the right to self-determination. This is basic. Why then such gross indifference to an ominous phenomenon that is unfolding before the eyes of all parties to the peace process?

To put the issue in proper perspective, Israel is the first party to be blamed for the water situation in the area. When a

country occupies another's territory, it assumes responsibility for its well-being and the well-being of its inhabitants. Obviously the Israeli government is privy to the information that the water situation in the Gaza Strip has become untenable from the health point of view. Surely Tel Aviv knows only too well why excessive drilling for water has become necessary for the Palestinian people in the Gaza area. They also know what are the chemical contents of the drinking water that is consumed by the people. Why nothing has been done to prevent the crisis or rather the catastrophe from taking place is something that cannot be left without adequate accountability.

The secondary responsibility of the Palestinian leadership, whether local or external, cannot be glossed over either. The people should have been told by their leaders that no matter how pressing water drilling has become, they have to know the health implications of such drilling. It seems nothing of the sort has taken place. No public outcry or dissemination of information about the problem has ever been undertaken. Since the ongoing peace process also deals with mundane issues as water resources, it would be most useful to put this problem on the agenda of the multilateral peace talks dealing with water in a bid to prevent the problem from exacerbating. This is where the Arab side should assume direct responsibility for addressing the issue since the Arab Palestinians themselves have the vested interest to stay alive.

We cannot expect the Israelis to be more concerned about the quality of life among the Palestinians than the Arab parties. This is where more work has to be done to reverse the tide in the water situation in the occupied territories.

Warning bell sounded for world's oceans

By Denise Searle

LONDON — The oceans are showing alarming signs of harm and this could cause wide-ranging damage to the global environment, according to a new study by the Worldwatch Institute.

The Washington-based organisation says the decline is caused largely by over-fishing,

alter the impact of tides and currents. A key sign of these problems is the reduction in fish catches, which are a major source of animal protein, particularly in many Third World countries.

"It's now believed that all 17

of the world's major fishing areas have been fished beyond their limits to replenish," says the institute. "Nine of these fisheries are in serious decline."

Current government policies continue to support overfishing, and international laws do not adequately protect coastal ecosystems, which nor

only feed fish, but have become the new frontier of medical research."

The report, by staff member Peter Weber, cites United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) figures which indicate that the annual world catch is unlikely to reach and maintain the projected 100 million tonnes unless stocks

are better managed.

The FAO largely agrees with

Worldwatch's conclusions, but emphasises that the decline in quality of fish stocks is as important as the drop in volume. High value species such as cod and haddock are becoming

rare and are being replaced by lower value and less stable varieties such as squid and pollack, explained Chris Newton, chief of the FAO's fishery information service.

"Of the total marine catch in 1991, 81.1 million tonnes, or 25 per cent, came from five species: Alaska Pollack, South American Pilchard, Peruvian

Anchovy, Chilean Jack Mackerel, Japanese Pilchard", he said. And he is concerned about this increasing reliance on a small number of species with a variable catch.

The Worldwatch report points out that Third World countries are exporting an increasing percentage of their fish to gain the hard currency

needed to pay off pressing foreign debts. This leaves less for local people.

"Increasing poverty, in turn, drives the fishing problem into an even more vicious circle", says Mr. Weber. "As fish become more scarce, more fishers turn to destructive practices such as fishing with poisons or dynamite — PANOS.

Endangered birds make comeback on NZ Island

By Pamela Graham
Reuters

KAPITI ISLAND, New Zealand — Visitors to Kapiti Island learn quickly what it is like to be mobbed by rare birds.

The red and brown kaka swoop from the trees to perch on heads and shoulders. "They're a stroppy lot," conservation department ranger Peter Daniel says.

The kaka, native parrots rarely seen in the wild, feed in groups of 10 or more from a trough of sugared water. When they've had their fill, the black, green and white tui take over.

"There's no bird that enjoys life so much as the tui," Mr. Daniel says. He should know. He has lived with the birds on Kapiti for 17 years and still considers himself a visitor.

Kapiti has become a sanctuary for re-building species decimated by Polynesian and European immigration. It is also an example of how native forest can regenerate after being three-quarters destroyed by axe and fire.

New Zealand's management of bird species has been criticised in the media for its bureaucracy. Kapiti represents a balancing act between competing interests.

These include disputes between conservationists about what species should and should not be put on the island, disputes with local fishermen over a marine reserve off the island, varying opinions on how to eradicate two species of rats from the island without disrupting birdlife, and the issues of the rights of local Maori and access in general.

"It's so hard getting it right," says Mr. Daniel.

Goats were eradicated in 1928, cats in 1934, sheep left in the 1950s and 22,500 possums were removed by 1986.

The eradication of possums was an important milestone as opinion before the programme started was that it couldn't be done. Traps and dogs were used over several years.

New Zealand conservationists' biggest enemy is the rat, introduced by ship-borne European settlers in the 19th century. Rats have decimated the country's bird population, more than half of which was flightless before vermin arrived.

Keeping the nature reserves free of rats is crucial to their success as most birds are slow-moving and unable to defend themselves.

Access to Kapiti, a thin sliver of land that rises majestically out of the Tasman Sea just north of Wellington, is tightly controlled by the government.

Only 50 people per day are allowed to visit and weekend visitors can wait up to a year for a permit.

Sheer cliffs rise 520 metres

to the summit of Kapiti on the western side and there are few landing spots. That makes it perfect for conservation work that is attracting international interest.

Inhabited by the Maori warrior Te Rauparaha, who used it as a stronghold in the 1820s, Kapiti became a whaling station.

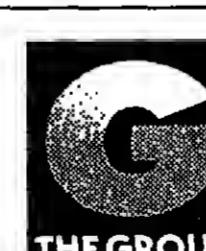
tion and then was cleared and farmed in the 1840s when the vegetation was burnt off. It became a public reserve in 1897.

The Department of Conservation sees Kapiti's contribution to the survival of bird species as being of international importance.

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Gaidar quits over reform dispute

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, the chief architect of economic reforms implemented over the past two years, announced Sunday he was resigning over policy disagreements with other members of the government.

"I cannot be at the same time in the government and in opposition to it," Mr. Gaidar, 37, wrote in a resignation letter sent to President Boris Yeltsin that was distributed to reporters during a briefing.

"That is why, with deep sadness, I am obliged to refuse the post of first deputy prime minister which was offered to me," the letter stated.

Mr. Gaidar said his resignation, tendered on the eve of the anticipated announcement of the new Russian government, had been accepted with "understanding" by Mr. Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

He had served in his current post since September.

Grigori Yavlinsky, a market-oriented economist who has opposed key points of the government's reforms, was discussed as a potential successor and Mr. Gaidar said he "warmly welcomed" the suggestion in talks with Mr. Chernomyrdin.

Mr. Gaidar's decision to step down, however, reflected serious divisions at the top level of government on whether to steam ahead with radical reforms or to change course and place more emphasis on protecting society from the shocks of the market.

These splits became starkly obvious following legislative elections last month in which ultranationalists led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky made an unexpectedly strong showing and began vying for representation in the government.

Radical black group suspends armed struggle against Pretoria

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies) — The South African government's last major guerrilla foe, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), is to suspend its armed actions with immediate effect, it was announced here Sunday.

Clarence Makwetu, president of APLA's political wing, the Pan African Congress (PAC), told a press conference that the unilateral decision had been taken Saturday at a meeting of the PAC's National Working Committee.

"The PAC is announcing this moratorium to show our commitment to peace, which is essential to ensure free and fair elections on April 27," Mr. Makwetu said, referring to South Africa's first-ever all-race poll.

He added, however, that APLA reserved the right to "defend the African people if they are attacked."

The hardline PAC, which boasts the slogan "one settler (white), one bullet," broke from the African National Congress (ANC) in 1959 over the question of whether whites could play a role in the fight against apartheid.

Colombo makes final peace offer to rebels ahead of military onslaught

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's "last chance" offer to negotiate with Tamil separatists at the weekend in a bid to end the long and bloody ethnic conflict was being seen here as a prelude to a major military showdown.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe invited the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to make peace proposals to a new parliamentary committee and said it would be his final offer to the rebels.

"This is the last chance extended to them (the LTTE) for discussion," Mr. Wickremesinghe told a public rally Saturday in the island's southern region, where the majority Sinhalese community is concentrated.

Tamil politicians and military analysts here interpreted the prime minister's remarks as a signal that Colombo would step up military pressure on the guerrillas, who are leading a campaign for a separate Tamil homeland.

Wickremesinghe himself expressed pessimism over the LTTE's willingness to respond. "The government has tried to initiate confidence-building measures, but their failure indicate that the LTTE cannot be trusted," he said.

"The LTTE's stand regarding political negotiations indicate that there is no interest in that direction," the premier said, although he did not spec-

In his resignation letter, Mr. Gaidar stated that he could no longer be held accountable for reforming the economy without also having the authority to block budgetary and other decisions that undermined it.

He cited two recent examples of recent government decisions he opposed: The move to bring Belarus into the "ruile zone" and the order to construct a new building at a cost of \$500 million to house the new Russian parliament.

"I cannot be responsible for reforms without having the possibility to stop such actions... and without the indispensable instruments to advance economic policies of which I am certain," Mr. Gaidar stated.

His resignation came a day after U.S. President Bill Clinton left Moscow following a two-day summit during which he received assurances from Mr. Yeltsin and other top officials, including Mr. Gaidar, that reforms would continue and perhaps speed up.

Apart from Mr. Yeltsin, Mr. Gaidar has been the one personality the West has most closely associated with Russia's radical market transformation and was seen as the main motivating force behind reform in the government.

Mr. Gaidar said his decision to resign was taken during a meeting of the reformist Russia's Choice political bloc that he heads and was supported by the bloc.

He also indicated that other resignations among Russia's leading government reformers may follow.

Ella Pamfilova, minister for social affairs and another leader of Russia's Choice, would soon step down while Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov "will take his decision in the coming days," Mr. Gaidar said.



Yegor Gaidar

Fyodorov was quoted by the radio station Echo Moscow as saying that recent decisions by the government such as those cited by Mr. Gaidar marked "the start of a reversal" in government policy.

He added that Russia's Choice had agreed that it would be "rather wise" to let Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais, who has responsibility for privatisation, to continue at his post.

"Despite everything, we have so far managed to stick to a logical and positive course in the area of privatisation," Mr. Gaidar said.

Mr. Yavlinsky, who authorised the "500-day plan" for economic reform under former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, also headed a reformist bloc that barely managed to amass the five per cent of votes needed to qualify for representation in the new parliament.

Mr. Yavlinsky notably opposed Mr. Gaidar's decision

to liberalise prices two years ago prior to launching the privatisation programme.

In his letter, Mr. Gaidar told Mr. Yeltsin he would continue to "firmly support you and your reform policy."

Mr. Fyodorov said Sunday he had lost his taste for work in the present government and criticised what he called unjustified spending projects, according to Echo Moscow.

"No one has personally invited me to enter the new government," he said according to the text of an interview. "I will take a decision (on my future) Monday or Tuesday."

"I believe that... we have reached a turning point, where everyone is being promised money and there are offers of stronger social support policies. But no one says who will pay and how this will happen."

"When these great projects arise from who knows where, of course one's enthusiasm for work in the government is low," he said.

Prospects dim for Bosnia peace talks

SARAJEVO (R) — Prospects for the latest round of Geneva peace talks dimmed Sunday after Bosnian leaders talked tough and fighting showed no sign of letting up.

Bosnian Muslim Vice President Ejup Ganic said the talks would be a useless charade without pressure on the Serbs to return lands with pre-war Muslim majorities, while Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic forecast a long fight.

International mediators Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg were due Athens for talks on Bosnia with Greece, which now holds the European Union presidency.

The mediators will meet Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias ahead of Tuesday's peace talks in Geneva, where Bosnia's warring Serbs, Muslims and Croats resume negotiations.

But for gunmen on the ground, it was business as usual.

U.N. peacekeeping soldiers spotted 30 Bosnian Serb helicopters over the government-held Sipovo region northeast of Tuzla Saturday night. U.N. military sources said.

They had no more details of what appeared to be another violation of the U.N. no-fly zone over Bosnia, which

monitored by NATO jets.

In central Bosnia Sunday, British soldiers cleared the main aid route between Gorjani Vakuf and Vitez of barricades erected by Muslims to protest at an alleged U.N. failure to deliver enough food to them along the way.

U.N. relief officials blamed local army units and civilian authorities, saying they were diverting U.N. supplies deposited instead of handing them out to needy civilians.

U.N. protection force Major Jose Labandeira described Sarajevo as having been relatively quiet. Even so, besieging Serb forces fired 200 artillery rounds into the city and the defending Muslim-led army replied with 38.

Maj. Labandeira said the exchanges killed one person and wounded four on the Bosnian side. Three were hurt behind Serb lines.

Olovo district, which has been under artillery attack by Serb forces keen on cutting off supply routes to the government-held Sipovo region northeast of Tuzla Saturday night. U.N. military sources said.

In the southeast, separatist Bosnian Croats loosed off 31 shells into the besieged Muslim Quarter of Mostar.

In Sarajevo, Mr. Ganic ar-

ticulated a tough political line.

"There is new pressure on our government not to give away what is ours," he said.

Bosnian Muslim Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic has threatened to boycott the talks if the shelling of Sarajevo does not stop.

The Geneva discussions aim to find agreement on a ceasefire and a plan to carve up Bosnia into three ethnic mini-states.

Nationalist Serb leader Radovan Karadzic again refused to meet NATO demands to allow aid into the airport at Tuzla, and would not budge on Serb demands for part of the Bosnian capital.

Sarajevo used to be completely a Serb city. We will never leave and it will be the capital of our new state," Mr. Karadzic told the U.S. daily the Washington Post.

Maj. Labandeira said the exchanges killed one person and wounded four on the Bosnian side. Three were hurt behind Serb lines.

Meanwhile, the outgoing commander of U.N. forces in Bosnia said the West should drop its threats of air strikes to break Serb sieges around Muslim pockets.

"You can't break the siege cordon around cities like Srebrenica, Gorazde or Mostar with air attacks," General Francis Briquemont told Monday's edition of the German weekly Der Spiegel.

U.S. Congress candidates begin campaigns

WASHINGTON (R) — House and Senate candidates are off and running for this November's U.S. elections.

With resurgent Republicans optimistic they can weaken or end control by entrenched Democrats.

All 435 House seats and 34 of the 100 Senate seats are at stake on Nov. 8. Democrats now enjoy majorities of 258-176 in the House with one independent and 56-44 in the Senate.

Democrats have controlled the House for the last four decades and the Senate for all but six of those years.

Republicans, depressed after George Bush lost the White House to President Bill Clinton in November 1992, have rebounded by winning six major races since then, electing senators in Georgia and Texas, governors in New Jersey and Virginia and mayors in New York City and Los Angeles —

Italian president dissolves parliament

ROME (AFP) — Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro Sunday dissolved parliament in a move that looks set to end the nearly 50-year domination of Italy's political life by the Christian Democrats.

Instructors included veterans of South Africa's bush war in southern Angola. Report said. Training lasted for seven weeks.

In a separate development, white extremists of the shadow Boer Republican Army (BRA) have issued death threats to three South African cabinet ministers and to a moderate right-wing leader. He will stay on as caretaker prime minister until new elections are held.

The president signed the decree for the dissolution of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, according to Article 88 of the constitution, the statement said. The decree was co-signed by Mr. Ciampi.

The decision was announced after a 90-minute meeting between Mr. Scalfaro and Mr. Ciampi at the presidential office in Quirinal Palace here earlier Sunday.

The dissolution of parliament, of which 350 members out of 945 are under investigation in the ongoing "clean hands" corruption scandal, paves the way for an end to nearly 50 years of political domination by the Christian Democrats.

They said final results of Saturday's referendum gave 99.99 per cent support to President Saparmurat Niyazov.

A senior government official said the victory would lay the foundation for an acceleration of potentially painful free-market reforms to the Communist-style economy of the small energy-rich republic, which borders Iran and Afghanistan.

The win means Mr. Niyazov, elected president with 99.5 per cent of the vote in 1992, may remain in power until the year 2002 and bypass a constitutional requirement that presidents must be reelected every five years.

They said the win means Mr. Niyazov, a 53-year-old ex-Communist Party boss, has gained genuine popularity among his people for funding a magnanimous welfare state from increased revenues from gas exports since independence in 1991.

Electricity, water and gas cost nothing for this country's 4.2 million people and bread is set to become free from 1996.

Concurrently, president, prime minister and head of the only legal party, Mr. Niyazov, is known by titles such as "chief of the Turkmen," "the first hero of Turkmenistan" and "the universally acknowledged leader."

The paper published a photograph of the boat, which it said was now renamed and registered in Guangdong. Mr. Li and a friend spent seven months searching for his uninsured boat after it was stolen from Hong Kong's Causeway Bay typhoon shelter on June 15. The Post said Mr. Li had also discovered three other boats stolen from Hong Kong and believed sold to wealthy Guangdong businessmen. Nine luxury boats, including property and garment tycoon Allan Zee Breeze II, were stolen from Hong Kong yacht clubs last year. Zhu Entao, head of China's Interpol National Central Bureau, said in December five stolen craft had been traced.

"Niyazov is no democrat but he is genuinely popular and the depth of social control in Turkmenistan is minute compared to the Soviet Union under Stalin," a foreign diplomat said.

According to the accounts, soldiers took the five to a cafe where between 25 and 30 corpses were piled up, bound their hands, blindfolded them and forced them onto the floor near the bodies.

The group said the soldiers then left, threatening to shoot them the following day.

The soldiers returned the next morning and dragged the five out to a military vehicle, from which the prisoners said they could see the troops dousing the cafe with gasoline. Minutes later, "we heard the explosion," one of them said.

Turkmen leader wins extra 5 years

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan (R) — The president of Turkmenistan, object of the former Soviet Union's most admiring personality cult, won an extra five years of power after a referendum overwhelmingly backed him, officials said Sunday.

They said final results of Saturday's referendum gave 99.99 per cent support to President Saparmurat Niyazov.

The decision was announced after a 90-minute meeting between Mr. Scalfaro and Mr. Ciampi at the presidential office in Quirinal Palace here earlier Sunday.

They said the win means Mr. Niyazov, a 53-year-old ex-Communist Party boss, has gained genuine popularity among his people for funding a magnanimous welfare state from increased revenues from gas exports since independence in 1991.

Electricity, water and gas cost nothing for this country's 4.2 million people and bread is set to become free from 1996.

Concurrently, president, prime minister and head of the only legal party, Mr. Niyazov, is known by titles such as "chief of the Turkmen," "the first hero of Turkmenistan" and "the universally acknowledged leader."

The paper published a photograph of the boat, which it said was now renamed and registered in Guangdong. Mr. Li and a friend spent seven months searching for his uninsured boat after it was stolen from Hong Kong's Causeway Bay typhoon shelter on June 15. The Post said Mr. Li had also discovered three other boats stolen from Hong Kong and believed sold to wealthy Guangdong businessmen. Nine luxury boats, including property and garment tycoon Allan Zee Breeze II, were stolen from Hong Kong yacht clubs last year. Zhu Entao, head of China's Interpol National Central Bureau, said in December five stolen craft had been traced.

"Niyazov is no democrat but he is genuinely popular and the depth of social control in Turkmenistan is minute compared to the Soviet Union under Stalin," a foreign diplomat said.

The win means Mr. Niyazov, elected president with 99.5 per cent of the vote in 1992, may remain in power until the year 2002 and bypass a constitutional requirement that presidents must be reelected every five years.

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Sports

U.S. Olympic Committee to discuss Harding case



Figure skater Tonya Harding waves to cameramen through her car window Jan. 15 as she and her ex-husband Jeff Gillooly drive up to her rural cabin (AFP photo)

PORTLAND, Oregon (R) — U.S. Olympic officials assembled late Saturday for a meeting Sunday to discuss the fate of figure skating champion Tonya Harding as Detroit prosecutors weighed evidence in the January 6 stabbing of her rival, Nancy Kerrigan.

The Sunday meeting in Durham, North Carolina, by U.S. Olympic Committee officials was previously scheduled but it has taken on a new urgency in light of the Kerrigan beating scandal that has shocked the world.

Harding and her former husband, Jeff Gillooly, huddled Saturday with their lawyers, who promised to issue a long-awaited statement soon.

With Harding's bodyguard and two associates charged with conspiracy in the attack, in which Kerrigan was whacked in the knee and forced out of the national championships, it remained unclear when and whether more suspects might be charged.

Intense speculation focused on Harding and Gillooly after a series of news reports alleged that two of the suspects already charged in the case have implicated them to authorities.

Harding and Gillooly, who divorced in August and then reconciled, have denied any involvement. But they have offered few words for the scores of reporters and television crew members who have descended on Portland to follow a tale that has the sporting world in an uproar a month before the Winter Olympics.

The Olympic committee was not expected to take any action over the weekend regarding Harding's place on the figure skating team — which also includes Kerrigan — which will compete next month in Lillehammer, Norway.

In Detroit, investigators sent the case to the Wayne County prosecutor's office for consideration of separate Michigan assault charges. Detroit deputy police chief Benny Napoleon said a decision is expected as early as Tuesday.

He declined to comment on how many people might be charged but told NBC's "Today" show Saturday, "To my

knowledge, there is no evidence to implicate Harding."

Harding's bodyguard Shawn Eckardt and suspected assailant Shane Stant, both of whom have been charged with conspiracy to commit assault, have told investigators that Harding knew in advance of the plot on Kerrigan, according to news reports.

But a woman who said she had been a close friend of Eckardt's contradicted that in a local television interview and said the bodyguard told her Gillooly asked him to arrange the attack "so that Tonya can win the Olympics."

"The way that I understood it was Jeff was doing this for Tonya, so he could look better in her eyes," Sarah Bergman told KATU-TV.

There were signs of eroding support for Harding, whose hardscrabble background and boisterous lifestyle have won her legions of fiercely loyal fans but never made her a favourite in the elite world of competitive figure skating.

The Olympic committee said in a statement it was in contact with law enforcement agencies "to monitor the situation as a basis for appropriate action."

"We are concerned about issues of sportsmanship as well as the potential of disruptive elements within the U.S. delegation at the games," USOC President Leroy Walker said.

Claire Ferguson, president of the U.S. Figure Skating Association, which has jurisdiction over Olympic skaters, said it would bar Harding only if evidence showed she were involved in the plot on Kerrigan.

But Ferguson said she would not try to dissuade Harding if she were to decide to withdraw.

Eckardt, 26, and Derrick Smith, 29, were freed on bail pending a meeting of a grand jury in Portland this week, which will decide whether to indict them on the felony conspiracy charge. Stant, 22, Smith's nephew, was in federal custody in Arizona on a charge of unlawful flight.

Smith is accused of driving the getaway car after the assault.

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Stangassinger wins World Cup slalom

Agencies

THOMAS Stangassinger clinched his second victory of the season and led a 1-2 Austrian finish in a men's World Cup slalom race Sunday in Kitzbuehel, Austria.

Stangassinger, 28, also seized the lead in World Cup Slalom standings by picking up 100 points for his victory.

Thomas Sykora, who was fifth after the first run, shot past the 59 gates on the Ganslern course in the second heat to finish second.

Alberto Tomba of Italy skied aggressively in the second run but could not improve on the third-place finish he held after the first run.

Still, it was Tomba's best race in a week. Tomba, the only Alpine skier to win consecutive Olympic gold medals, had failed to complete his last three races. He had won two slaloms earlier in the season.

The Italian superstar will be shooting for a fourth gold medal next month at the Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway.

way. Tomba won the giant slalom Olympic titles in 1988 and 1992, and the slalom gold medal in 1988.

"I charged my batteries for Lillehammer," Tomba said.

Tomas Fogdole of Sweden, the World Cup slalom champion, who was second after the first heat, had an error-filled second run and dropped to fourth.

Stangassinger, who had a big lead in the previous slalom in Kranska Gora, Slovenia, one week ago, only to fall in the second run, made no mistakes this time. He posted an aggregate time of one minute, 37.85 seconds to win the season's sixth slalom.

"It's always special to win here before so many Austrian fans," said Stangassinger, who has been battling a flu. It was his fourth career World Cup victory.

Stangassinger won the season's opening slalom in the United States at Park City, Utah, in November, and was second in Stoneham, Canada.

Bulls beat Rockets

CHICAGO (R) — The Chicago Bulls keep on proving there

is life after Michael Jordan.

Scottie Pippen scored 25 points and grabbed 12 rebounds as the Bulls won their 13th straight home game, beating the struggling Houston Rockets 82-76 Saturday.

Pippen, who scored five of his points in the last five minutes, also had six assists.

B.J. Armstrong added 15 points and Bill Wennington chipped in 11 points and seven rebounds for the Bulls, who improved to 14-2 at home.

Hakeem Olajuwon, who poured in a season-high 45 points in a loss at Washington Thursday, led Houston with 29 points. He was the only Rocket in double figures.

Houston is now 6-6 since opening the season with a blazing 22-1 start. The Bulls improved to 19-4 after a 4-7 start.

The Bulls (23-11) are only one game behind last year's championship pace despite Jordan's retirement just before the season's start.

At Indiana, Reggie Miller scored 26 points and Antonio Davis scored seven of his 14 in the decisive fourth quarter as the Pacers snapped the Atlanta Hawks' seven-game winning streak 94-91.

Indiana, which also snapped a 14-game Hawks winning streak when it dealt them their only home loss of the season Dec. 16, has won four of its last five games.

Kevin Willis had 28 points and 16 rebounds to pace Atlanta, which is still the best in the eastern conference at 24-8. Dominique Wilkins added 23 points.

In Dallas, the Mavericks set the NBA record for most consecutive home losses by suffering their 17th straight defeat at Reunion Arena, 104-87 to the San Antonio Spurs.

David Robinson and Terry Cummings each scored 20 points to lead the Spurs.

The Mavs broke a consecutive-home-loss record they shared with Orlando. Earlier this season, they tied the 1972-73 Philadelphia 76ers for

consecutive losses in a season with 20.

Jamal Mashburn scored a game-high 26 for Dallas, which lost its ninth in a row to fall to a league-worst 2-32, 0-17 at home. The Spurs won their 10th in their last 11 games.

In Cleveland, Gerald Wilkins and Brad Daugherty scored 20 points apiece and the Cavaliers held the Philadelphia 76ers to eight points in the second quarter en route to a 110-67 win.

The 67 points scored by Philadelphia was a franchise low and the fewest ever allowed by a Cavalier squad.

The NBA record for fewest points in a quarter is four, set by Sacramento against the Lakers in 1987, and the record for a game is 57, set by Milwaukee against Boston in 1955.

Clarence Weatherspoon scored 18 points to lead Philly.

In New York, Patrick Ewing scored 23 points and newly acquired Derek Harper keyed an 18-2 fourth-quarter run that led the Knicks to a 97-88 victory over the Detroit Pistons.

Harper scored 18 points as New York won its fourth straight game and banded Detroit its 12th consecutive loss — the Pistons' longest losing streak since they dropped a club-record 14 in a row in 1979-80.

Charles Oakley collected 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks.

Terry Mills scored 21 points, Joe Dumars added 18 and Isiah Thomas had 14 for Detroit.

In Seattle, Shawn Kemp scored 16 of his 25 points in the first half as the Supersonics raced out to a 15-point half-time lead en route to a 97-78 victory over the Miami Heat.

The win snapped a two-game losing streak for Seattle, which has the league's best record at 27-5, and extended Miami's losing streak to four.

The Sonics' stifling defence forced 20 Miami turnovers.

Steve Smith scored 15 points to lead the Heat.

and Sestriere, Italy, also in November.

Marc Girardelli of Luxembourg, the defending World Cup champion who is seeking a record sixth overall title, straddled a gate halfway into the first run and was eliminated.

Girardelli, who finished second in Saturday's downhill, missed an opportunity to pick up combination points. Sunday's slalom and the downhill counted for the season's first combination, a paper race that combines the results of the two races.

Lasse Kjus of Norway won the combination and picked up 100 points.

Another Norwegian, Kjetil Andre Aamodt, finished second in the combination, earned 80 points and extended his overall lead over Guenther Mader of Austria.

Stangassinger's victory completed a good weekend for the Austrian men, following Patrick Ortlieb's win in Saturday's downhill.

Everton end dismal streak with 6-2 rout

LONDON (R) — Tony Cottee hit a hat-trick as Everton, with only one point and two goals in their previous seven premier league games, marked new manager Mike Walker's debut with a crushing 6-2 win over Swindon Saturday.

Manchester United retained their 13-point lead at the top with a 1-0 win at Tottenham, Welsh striker Mark Hughes scoring his 12th goal of the season four minutes after the interval.

England's Alan Shearer took his overall tally to 22 with both goals, one in each half, as second-placed Blackburn Rovers, who have two games in hand, kept in touch with the champions with a 2-1 win at Sheffield United.

United had Alan Cork and Carl Bradshaw sent off in the final quarter of an hour, both for their second bookable offences.

Two Birmingham City players were also shown the red card at Watford as their side crashed to a 5-2 defeat in the first division, although their nine men pulled back two late goals.

At Everton, new manager Walker got a standing ovation before the start. Striker Cottee contributed two goals in the last six minutes after bottom club Swindon, down to 10 men, had pulled back to 2-2 with two goals in six minutes in the second half.

Swindon bad striker Andy Mutch sent off in the 51st minute for retaliating after a foul by John Ebbrell, scorer of Everton's opening goal in the fourth minute.

Arsenal's 0-0 draw at Manchester City, their sixth game without conceding a goal, left them three points behind Blackburn in third place on 45. Blackburn have 48 and Manchester United 41.

Former West Ham star Cottee put Everton two up in the 42nd minute and they sat on their lead after Swindon were reduced to 10 men, allowing John Moncur and Welsh international Paul Bodin to level the score after an hour.

Defender Gary Ablett restored Everton's lead in the 71st minute, ramming home the rebound after Matthew Jackson had headed against the bar.

Cottee completed his second hat-trick of the season with an 89th-minute penalty as Swindon conceded another three goals in the final six minutes. Peter Beagrie ended the rout with an injury-time header.

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Date defeats Fernandez, wins New South Wales Open

SYDNEY (R) — Kimiko Date won her first major singles title outside Japan Sunday when she upset American Mary Joe Fernandez 6-4 6-2 in the women's final at the New South Wales Open.

Date's two previous career victories came in the 1992 and 1993 Japan opens. Her unexpected success on a hot day at white city was the highlight of the 23-year-old's career.

It was never a classic final and Fernandez, an impressive semifinal winner over Gabriela Sabatini, was a big disappointment after taking an early 3-0 lead in the first set.

The delighted Date's reward was a cheque for \$60,000, \$18,000 more than Pete Sampras received for winning Saturday's men's final. The women's event has a higher rating on the WTA tour than its male counterpart has in the ATP calendar.

Date's win confirmed the rising profile of Japanese players in Australia following her compatriot Mana Endo's success in the Tasmanian Open earlier in the weekend.

The champion's limited knowledge of Australian tennis history, however, was exposed after the prize-giving ceremony. Asked if she enjoyed meeting ex-champion Evonne Goolagong, who presented her with the trophy, Date confessed she had never heard of her.

Speaking via an interpreter, she also revealed she would be putting the biggest cheque of her career straight into a deposit account and was hoping for more success in Melbourne.

In the opening games, however, such a scenario looked unlikely as Date's almost embarrassing early attempts to volley at the net helped give Fernandez an instant advantage.

The American world number seven was two breaks up within minutes, allowing Date just six points, and even slipped in a couple of aces on her way to a 4-2 lead.

At that point, however, her game fell apart for no obvious reason, allowing Date to reel off four games in a row and take the set in 47 minutes.

Fernandez instantly broke her opponent's serve at the start of the second set but again it proved a false dawn.



Date, still mixing the occasional dramatic mishit into her steady baseline game, won six of the last seven games and hustled to victory in 84 minutes.

"I made too many unforced errors," Fernandez admitted. "She just seemed not to make too many mistakes and forced the game."

Date, seeded fifth and ranked 13th in the world, also

seems to respond positively to playing higher-rated players. She conceded only nine games in total during wins this week over Fernandez and world number four Conchita Martinez.

Fernandez and Australian men's player Sandon Stolle later presented a cheque for over \$25,000 to Sydney's bushfire appeal on behalf of the tournament and players.

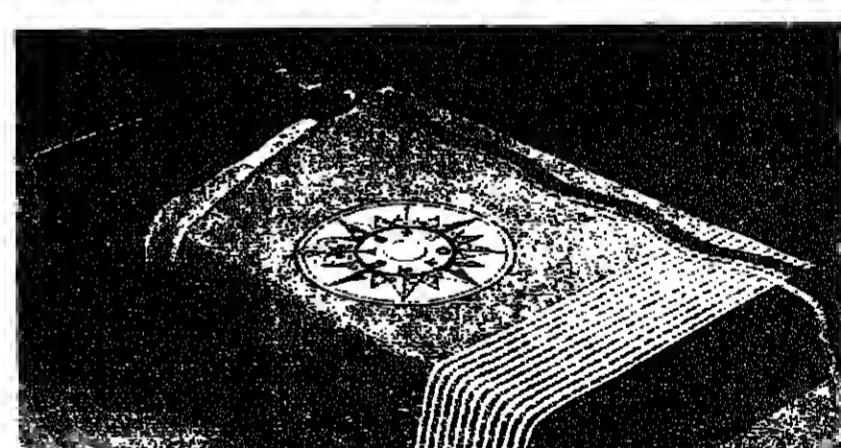
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NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N. ready to help Mideast peace process

GENEVA (AP) — U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali reaffirmed in a meeting with the Syrian President Hafez Al Assad that the United Nations was ready to help push forward the Middle East peace process, his spokeswoman said Sunday. Therese Taut said Dr. Ghali told Mr. Assad in a meeting in Geneva Saturday that the United Nations was ready to help if asked to go so by the Arab and Israeli partners in the search for peace. Mr. Assad, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharra, voiced his support for the world body and its secretary general, according to Ms. Gastaut. The meeting was the first between Mr. Assad and a U.N. secretary general since 1984, when Javier Perez de Cuellar visited Damascus.

Israelis attack Arab suspects in court

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Relatives of two Israeli teenagers killed in an Arab guerrilla attack pounced on three Palestinian suspects in a Jerusalem court on Sunday, radio reports said. Israeli guards intervened and the defendants, one of them bleeding, were rushed out of the courtroom. The judge postponed the murder trial for three weeks and warned the families against further disturbances, radio reporters who witnessed the incident said. Court officials declined to comment on the attack against Abdul Jawad Shamasna, Mohammad Shamasna, Ibrahim Shamasna, members of the mainstream Fatah faction. They are charged with killing four Israelis. Among their alleged victims were Lior Tubil, 17, and Ronen Karimani, 18, whose deaths in 1990 ignited several days of riots and revenge attacks in which one Arab was killed.

Israeli gunboats wound Lebanese fisherman

TYRE, Lebanon (R) — Israeli gunboats opened machinegun fire on a number of fishing boats off South Lebanon on Sunday, wounding one fisherman, security sources said. They said the Israeli gunboats opened fire at the vessels off the coastal village of Qiyaleh, eight kilometres south of the port town of Tyre. The wounded fisherman was taken to a hospital in Tyre. Israeli boats, which often patrol the southern Lebanon coast to stop seaborne guerrilla raids on northern Israel, imposed a two-week ban late last year on fishing in the Tyre area.

Iran releases religious leader

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran said Sunday it had released a Christian religious leader from jail after denouncing allegations that he had been sentenced to death for apostasy. The Islamic Republic News Agency said Mehdi Dehbad had been freed on bail pending a court investigation on charges that were not disclosed. Earlier this month, the U.S. State Department called on Iran to release Mr. Dehbad, who was believed to be on death row because of his conversion from Islam. Mr. Dehbad was described as a minister in the Evangelical Assemblies of God Church.

Thai officials to visit Libya

BANGKOK (AP) — Thai officials are due to visit Thai workers in Libya early next week to survey their conditions and see if there is a need for more labour there, a news report said Sunday. Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qadhafi in November threatened to expel as many as 10,000 Thai workers from his country for Thailand's alleged support of U.S. charges that Libya was producing chemical weapons. Thai workers were reportedly expelled from Libya, but it was denied by Thai Deputy Prime Minister Boonchoo Rojanastien when he met with a Libyan diplomat here in November. The Thai delegation's visit is due to begin Tuesday, the Thai-language daily Matichon said. It will be led by the Labour and Social Welfare Ministry's deputy permanent-secretary, Prasong Ranawand, and the deputy director of the employment service department, Wong Chantong. Two hundred Thai workers left Libya shortly after Col. Qadhafi's threat, but they had reached the end of their contracts and were not expelled.

Sharjah bans single women at hotels

DUBAI (R) — Sharjah, considered the most conservative of the United Arab Emirates, has banned tourists and prohibited single women from renting rooms in an apparent bid to stem a tide of unwelcome visitors. The Sharjah newspaper Al Khaleej said on Sunday the government, which applies strict Islamic laws, stopped issuing tourist visas from Jan. 15. No reason was given. Sharjah residents have reported a rise in the crime rate and say that some single women who go there engage in prostitution because hotels are cheaper than in booming Dubai next door. Hundreds of Russians and citizens of other former Soviet republics fly to Sharjah each week on charter flights. Most buy cheap electronic goods to sell back home at double the price. Some women have been found engaged in prostitution but many of those regularly chased out of the emirate come from the Indian subcontinent or poorer Arab countries like Egypt. The Sharjah government earlier this week banned single women from renting hotel rooms or furnished apartments and said women should be accompanied by husbands or a male relative. Newspapers also said that a Sharjah appeals court on Saturday sentenced three men to death for drug smuggling, the first such sentence in the UAE against drug traffickers. They said the Pakistani men, two of whom were sentenced in absentia, had been accused of smuggling more than three tonnes of hashish and half a kilo of heroin.

Lebanon's currency reserve quadrupled

BEIRUT (AP) — Prime Minister Rafik Hariri said Saturday Lebanon's foreign currency reserves rose from \$450 million to about \$2 billion in 14 months. Mr. Hariri told reporters the rise in treasury coffers was used to strengthen the nation's currency, which now rates 1,700 Lebanese pounds to the dollar. The pound rated 2,800 to the dollar when Mr. Hariri took office Oct. 31, 1992. Mr. Hariri, a self-made business tycoon who has vowed to lift Lebanon from the ashes of its 1975-1990 civil war, is backed by Syria, Lebanon's main power broker, and Saudi Arabia, the Arab World's richest country. His remarks were made in answer to questions about the 1994 budget his government intends to put before the Lebanese parliament to accelerate the process of post-war reconstruction. "There are no apprehensions in announcing the new budget because the treasury is now relatively prosperous," Mr. Hariri said. The government says it needs \$4.4 billion to start the reconstruction process, which would cost \$10 billion altogether. By United Nations counts, Lebanon sustained \$25 billion worth of destruction during the 1975-1990 civil war.

Canadian official meets Palestinians

DAMASCUS (R) — Canada's top diplomat in the Middle East had talks with two Palestinian leaders opposed to the autonomy deal with Israel. Palestinian officials and diplomats said Marc Perron, assistant deputy minister for Africa and the Middle East, had separate meetings on Saturday with George Habash, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and N. M. Hawatmeh, leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Diplomats said the talks were the first public contact between a Western official and Palestinian hardliners. A PFLP spokesman said the talks, held at Mr. Perron's request, dealt with efforts to find a solution to the Palestinian problem. "Habash reiterated the PFLP's rejection of the Gaza-Jenin plan because it did not respond to the minimum rights of the Palestinian people," the spokesman said. He said Dr. Habash "urged Canada to press Israel to respond to U.N. resolutions which constitute a basis for any solution..."

Majali, Aziz review Jordan-Iraq relations

Iraq seeks help to end sanctions

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Sunday met with Iraqi deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz for talks on Jordanian-Iraqi relations, officials said.

Diplomatic sources said Mr. Aziz, who arrived here Saturday, was seeking Jordanian intervention with Washington to end the international sanctions imposed against his country following its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

No official comment was available on the Majali-Aziz talks, which were attended by other ministers. Officials who spoke on condition of anonymity said the meeting covered a broad range of cooperation in the oil industry. No Jordanian confirmation of the INA report was available.

But according to the diplomatic sources, Mr. Aziz wanted to request Jordan to raise the issue of the sanctions during the Jan. 21 meeting at the White House between His Majesty King Hussein and President Bill Clinton.

"Iraq has met all the requirements of the U.N. resolutions" related to the Gulf war ceasefire in March and April 1991, and, "as such, Iraq believes that the sanctions should be removed as soon as possible," said a diplomatic source.

"It is a straight-forward move and Mr. Aziz's talks in Amman come in the context of the international efforts exerted by Iraq to end the sanctions," added the source. There was no immediate word on how Jordan was responding to the Iraqi request.

Dr. Majali and Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shakir as well as several other members of the Cabinet are expected to leave for Washington Tuesday to join King Hussein in his meeting with President Clinton.

Jordan has repeatedly invited international attention to the suffering of Iraqi people, particularly children and the elderly, who are not victims of the sanctions, which have deprived the country of external revenues to pay for its people's needs.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to hold a periodic review of the sanctions on Tuesday, but it is not expected to lift the embargo for at least another six months — a period that U.N. sanctions enforcement officials say is needed to ensure that long-term monitoring of Iraqi weapon development programme is in place.

The project's economic viability is based on an estimated \$2 to \$3 billion savings in annual electricity generation costs after its expected inauguration in 1998.

No real let-up seen in Afghan power battle

KABUL (Agencies) — Residents of this bomb-battered capital cautiously left basements and makeshift shelters Sunday morning, taking advantage of a lull in factional fighting to stock up on food and fuel.

But the respite was short-lived. Witnesses said jets returned to the skies in the early afternoon, bombing the Bala-Hiss Fort on the southern outskirts of the city, a stronghold of Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum.

The latest round of fighting began New Year's Day when forces loyal to General Dostum and Prime Minister Gul-

buddin Hekmatyar tried to topple President Burhanuddin Rabbani. It appears Mr. Rabbani has been able to hold on to most government buildings and the country's strategic military sites.

But the capital has taken a beating. Tens of thousands of residents have fled the city, becoming stranded in poorly-supplied camps in the bitter cold outside Jalalabad, about 200 kilometres east.

Entire neighbourhoods in Kabul have been reduced to rubble. Most people who remained in the city crowd together in tiny shelters.

Mrs. Afri was a native of Mirecourt, in the Vosges region of eastern France, and her parents still live there.

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Elders of Mogadishu's main warring clans signed a peace agreement Sunday after three days of talks aimed at stopping renewed factional fighting in the civil war, was signed at the Kahl Hotel in Mr. Ali Mahdi's north Mogadishu enclave.

The talks brought together 176 religious leaders and "uqas," or traditional chiefs, from the clans of warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed and his enemy, self-styled President Ali Mahdi Mohammad. Several other smaller clans were also represented.

But the warlords themselves did not attend the meeting, chaired by a prominent Islamic leader, the imam of Hirsh, Mahmoud Omar, revered both by General Aideed's Hahr Gedir and Mr. Ali Mahdi's Aqgal subclans.

"This is the beginning of a peaceful settlement in Somalia and Allah will support us,"

Imam Mahmud told reporters after the agreement.

The accord, which calls for an end to the division of Mogadishu into sectors controlled by the two warlords, and the return of property looted in the civil war, was signed at the Kahl Hotel in Mr. Ali Mahdi's north Mogadishu enclave.

"I believe this meeting was fruitful because the people are fed up with war. Ali Madi and Aideed are dawans and so they must follow all the agreements reached by their clans," said the imam, wearing a red-and-gold embroidered tunic and white turban with black sunglasses.

Previous peace accords between the warlords, however, have come to nothing, and United Nations-brokered talks in Addis Ababa broke up without agreement last month.

But Italian Ambassador Mario Scialoja, who visited the

imam during the talks Sunday, expressed optimism.

"I am confident that this agreement between the Hahr Gedir and the Aqgal will lead to reconciliation between the two clans," he said before driving away with an Italian military escort.

"This could lead to a political agreement," Mr. Scialoja said, "in another few weeks we might reach a breakthrough."

He stressed that the meeting, planned by the imam for at least three months and partly funded by the United Nations, had involved no political leaders, but was the first traditional gathering of so many influential clan chieftains in Mogadishu since factional fighting erupted after the 1991 overthrow of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre.

The clan elders, who sat cross-legged on carpets during the talks on Thursday, Friday



A DEAL: Syrian President Hafez Al Assad (left) and U.S. President Bill Clinton shake hands prior to their summit in Geneva on Sunday (AFP photo)

COLUMN 8

Clinton dines out in Geneva's old town

GENEVA (R) — President Bill Clinton spent the last night of his first European tour dining out with his family at a 17th-century restaurant in Geneva's old town. Mr. Clinton, on the eve of a meeting with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad Sunday to discuss Middle East peace, spent more than two hours in "Les Armoires" (The Armours) restaurant. Dressed in a jacket and open-neck plaid shirt, Mr. Clinton emerged smiling from the restaurant, waving to a crowd of about 200 who braved the cold night for a glimpse of the president, his wife Hillary and daughter Chelsea. Mr. Clinton then returned to his hotel in the black limousine flown over from Washington for a week-long trip that has included stops in Brussels, Prague, Kiev, Moscow and Minsk. The president ate "choucroute," a traditional dish of hot cabbage and sausages, and drank local draught beer at the restaurant, according to staff.

Mr. Clinton suggested on Friday that some of the Jewish settlements on the Heights, seized from Syria in 1967 and "annexed" in 1981, could be placed under Syrian sovereignty.

Some 12,000 Jews live in 33 settlements on the Golan, which is home also to 16,000 Druze.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad held talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Geneva on Sunday aimed at breaking the deadlock in the bilateral Middle East peace talks.

Hundreds of Jewish settlers marked the summit by setting fire to tyres and blocking a crossroads in protest at a possible Israeli withdrawal from the Golan.

They shouted "we won't come down from the Golan," as police broke up the demonstration near the town of Katzrin and made arrests.

The demonstrators accused Mr. Clinton of betraying a pre-election pledge in 1992 not to give up the Heights.

Police and demonstrators exchanged blows when the police tried to push them to the side of a road near Kalzern.

"Of course the tension is rising here," Eli Malka, head of the Golan settlements council, told reporters.

Rabin raps Beilin for criticising Golan colonies

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin Sunday rapped Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin for criticising Israeli settlements on the Golan Heights.

Mr. Beilin suggested on Friday that some of the Jewish

settlements if Syria offered total peace, with diplomatic relations, the opening of borders and detailed security arrangements.

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Mr. Rabin told the weekly cabinet meeting, referring to Mr. Beilin's statement.

Mr. Beilin suggested on Friday that it was a mistake to create these settlements on the Golan or in other territories after the war of June 1967.

"But they exist today and we can't just wipe them off the map," he said.

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid supported Mr. Beilin on Sunday, saying his views were backed by most members of the government.

"For 20 years people like me have been saying the settlements are an obstacle on the path to peace," Mr. Sarid told reporters.

On Saturday, Mr. Sarid said Israel would have to give up its

oil-rich Golan.

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Libyan suspects could go on trial at the Hague

EDINBURGH (R) — Two Libyans accused of blasting an American airliner out of the sky over Lockerbie, Scotland five years ago with the loss of 270 lives could be tried in the Netherlands, one of their lawyers said on Sunday.

Alastair Duff said defence lawyers were meeting in Geneva to discuss a compromise worked out between British and Libyan government intermediaries.

He said he could not attend because of a high court trial in Glasgow but would fly to Geneva as soon as possible.

The plan provides for Abdul Baset Ali Mohammad Al Megrahi and Al Amin Khalifa Flimah to be tried at the Hague, seat of the International Court of Justice.

The trial would be under Scots law and Scottish procedure, but with an international panel of judges instead of a jury. The panel would be headed by a Scottish judge.

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Legwell told Scotland on Sunday newspaper. "I am satisfied the principles of Scots law would be acceptable."

The reports said Britain's Foreign Office had indicated its provisional approval, but a spokesman said this was not the case. "The two suspects should be surrendered for trial in Scotland or the United States," he said.

Mr. Duff said the plan would require some modification of Scottish legal procedure, which provides for a jury in cases of murder and does not encompass a panel of judges.

"I have said for some time that if the Scottish and American authorities want a trial they will have to be more flexible," Mr. Duff told Reuters on Sunday.

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and Sunday and exchanged Korans at the close of the meeting, also agreed to enforce Islamic law (Sharia) under which thieves have their hands cut off.

Armed robbery is rife in Somalia, without a government or any authority other than the gun or the United Nations, which has more than 25,000 peacekeepers in the country but has failed to restore law and order.

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